

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

**Only in New York:
Hotel serves up
\$10,000 martini**

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**Air power is sight
for sore-eyed
troops in Iraq**

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for divorce**

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Meriam Al-Khalifa Johnson and Jason Johnson

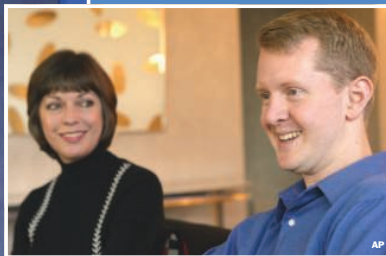
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004

U.S. troop numbers to rise for Iraq vote

Two 82nd Airborne battalions to bolster security for Jan. 30 election Page 3

'Jeopardy!' superman loses on 75th game



**Woman defeats
winner of largest
game show jackpot**

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Left: "Jeopardy!" contestants Ken Jennings and Nancy Zerg hug after his 74-game winning streak on the show came to an end. His winnings totaled more than \$2.5 million. Above: The two contestants talk to reporters on Tuesday, the day Jennings' last show aired in the States.

SONY PICTURES TELEVISION/AP

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

War on terrorism

Granger prisoner abuse case: The soldier shown most prominently in photos of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq has returned to a U.S. military base and will have a hearing before a military judge Monday, his attorney said.

Spc. Charles Granier Jr., 36, of Uniontown, Pa., was returned under military escort to Fort Hood, Texas, this week, his civilian defense attorney, Guy Womack, said Wednesday.

Statements by President Bush and military leaders have tainted any potential military panel, Womack said, and he will have to have the case dismissed during preliminary hearings next week.

"I'm asking the court to dismiss on the grounds of unlawful command influences," Womack said. "The president and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have made statements saying my client is guilty and there should be punishment."

States

Woman's execution: The Texas parole board has recommended delaying the execution of a woman accused of killing her husband and two young children, leaving the chance for a reprieve in the hands of the governor.

Gov. Rick Perry can agree with the board's 5-1 vote or allow the execution to go ahead as scheduled Wednesday. Perry spokeswoman Kathy Watt said late Tuesday the case was under review.

Frances Newton, 39, could become the first black woman executed in Texas. She was convicted in the 1987 shooting deaths of her husband and two children, ages 20 months and 7. Prosecutors said Newton killed her family to collect \$100,000 in insurance benefits.

The parole board recommended delaying her execution for four months so her attorneys can conduct new ballistics tests on the pistol prosecutors said was the murder weapon and chemical analysis on the clothing she was wearing.

Turnpike strike: The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission said Tuesday night that it reached a tentative contract with striking toll collectors, ending a walkout that began a day before Thanksgiving.

The toll collectors were scheduled to return to work their next scheduled shifts beginning at 11 p.m. Tuesday, turnpike spokesman Bill Capone said.

The agreement, which is still subject to union ratification, was reached around Tuesday evening, officials said. Terms of the contract were to be released Wednesday morning.

Sheryl Crow case: A love-struck fan who ardently pursued singer Sheryl Crow for 15 months was acquitted Tuesday of stalking her.

A jury deliberated about three hours before finding Ambrose Kappos, 38, not guilty of burglary and stalking charges. He faced up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Outside court, Kappos said he believes he was "delusional" when he thought he was communicating telepathically with Crow.

During the trial, defense lawyer Stanford Hickman pointed out Kappos was always polite and never threatened anyone. Kappos insisted he was merely a love-struck fan.

BTX killer: The serial killer known only as "BTX" suggests in letters that he was



Lynndie England case: Pfc. Lynndie England arrives at the XVIII Airborne Corps Staff Judge Advocate Building at Fort Bragg, N.C. for an Article 32 motion hearing Wednesday leading up to her Jan. 18 court-martial on abuse charges stemming from photos of her pointing and smiling at naked Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison. Her lawyers moved Wednesday to throw out statements she made when first questioned about the abuse, including that reservists were just "joking around, having some fun."

Pfc. Arthur, an Army special investigator, testified that England was aware of her rights, including to have a lawyer present, when she was interviewed. At the end of the questioning, he said, she wrote and signed a statement detailing her actions.

born in 1939 and is a railroad buff, authorities said Tuesday as they appealed to the public for clues to his identity.

Police released a summary of personal details provided in recent letters they believe were sent by the killer.

The killer — known by the self-coined nickname BTK, which stands for "Bind, Torture, Kill" — is linked to eight unsolved homicides that terrorized Wichita between 1974 and 1986. After years of silence, the killer surfaced again, sending messages earlier this year.

Nightclub fire: Attorneys representing families of some of the 100 people killed in the West Warwick, R.I., nightclub fire as well as a number who were injured have agreed to drop CBS Broadcasting Inc. as a defendant in one of the lawsuits filed in the aftermath.

Lawyers for both sides signed a stipulation dropping the claims against CBS. The stipulation was entered into the court record on Monday.

CBS attorney Michael DeLuca said CBS was originally named in the suit because plaintiffs thought it had control over WPRI-TV. The CBS affiliate employed one of the nightclub's owners and a cameraman who was at the club recording tape for a story on building safety when the fire began.

World

Powell in Haiti: Secretary of State Colin

Powell met on Wednesday with Haitian political leaders and other opponents of ousted President Jean Bertrand Aristide in Port-au-Prince in what is likely his last visit to Haiti as the United States' top diplomat.

Shortly after Powell entered the National Palace in the Haitian capital for meetings with President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerald Latortue, gunfire erupted outside. It was not clear whether the shots were aimed at the U.S. ambassador, but a palace security officer said they appeared to come from a single passing car.

Powell went to Haiti to reaffirm U.S. support for democracy there, review American efforts to help the country overcome recent natural disasters, and commemorate World AIDS Day by meeting with young Haitians who receive and provide HIV/AIDS support services.

Philippines storm: The death toll from a powerful rainstorm that triggered landslides and flash floods in the eastern Philippines rose to 412, with 177 people still missing, officials said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, winds and rain from another approaching typhoon hampered rescue efforts and prompted authorities to raise an alert over the country's already battered eastern provinces.

Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes told disaster officials in Manila that police had reported 412 dead, 63 injured and 177 missing.

China mine explosion: The death toll in a huge coal mine explosion in central China rose to 165 on Wednesday, government radio reported, making it the deadliest accident in the country's disaster-plagued mining industry in years.

The report on the Web site of China National Radio came after officials said rescue efforts were blocked by fires and toxic fumes in the Chenjiashan coal mine, which was hit by an explosion Sunday.

"All 166 miners in the mine are dead," the report said, citing an unidentified spokesman for the rescue headquarters. It didn't say whether more bodies had been found or given other details.

South Korea nuclear experiments: North Korea vowed Wednesday to make South Korea's past secret nuclear experiments a top priority for discussion in six-nation nuclear talks aimed at ending the communist North's nuclear weapons programs.

The North's new maneuver threatens to further complicate the prospects for the stalled talks, as Washington and its allies are struggling to set a date for resuming the nuclear negotiations. A meeting scheduled for September failed to take place because the North refused to attend.

"It is illogical for (North Korea) to unilaterally dismantle its nuclear deterrent force unless the secret nuclear-related experiments of South Korea are thoroughly probed," a spokesman of the North's Foreign Ministry told its official news agency, KCNA.

"Under this situation (North Korea) is left with no option but to increase its nuclear deterrent force," the spokesman said.

Alleged spy flights: North Korea claimed Wednesday that the U.S. military conducted at least 190 spy flights against it in November, seeking an opportunity to invade.

"This is a clear indication that the U.S. imperialists are watching for a chance to mount a pre-emptive attack on the (North), while frantically pursuing their hostile policy towards it," said the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Some 82nd Airborne troops headed to Iraq

BY ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department is sending elements of the 82nd Airborne Division to Iraq to bolster security in advance of Iraq's election, scheduled for late January, an Army official told Stars and Stripes.

Two battalions of the 82nd Airborne Brigade (the Division Ready Brigade), based in Fort Bragg, N.C., are going in, to equal 1,500 paratroopers, an Army official told Stars and Stripes.

In addition, at least two Army brigades now operating in northern Iraq will have their tours extended by about two months, until after the election, the official said speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon is extending more than 10,000 servicemembers for a period of two to four months. By the time elections are held in January, there will be about 150,000 U.S. troops on the ground, up from an estimated 138,000.

The following units will be extended:

■ The 2nd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

■ The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit,

Two battalions to bolster security for election; at least two brigades in north to be extended

based on Okinawa, Japan.

■ Elements of the 13th Corps Support Command, of Fort Hood, Texas, though the Army official could not say which elements.

The Pentagon announced in late October that about 3,500 soldiers of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and 3,000 from the 1st Infantry Division headquarters would remain in Iraq two months longer than planned.

The decisions were announced Wednesday. Members of the 82nd Airborne and their families, were notified of the decision Tuesday, the official said. The battalions were given what the Army calls a warning order, alerting them that they will be gone.

The 82nd Airborne is generally relied upon by the Army to keep one of its three brigades on short-notice alert year-round

to deploy abroad in the event of a crisis. Shortly before the October elections in Afghanistan, elements of the 82nd Airborne were sent there to beef up security.

Military officials have said repeatedly in recent weeks that they were considering whether more American troops would be required to provide sufficient security in advance of the Jan. 30 election.

As recently as Tuesday, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said commanders in Iraq were still studying troop requirements ahead of the election. He quipped that the Pentagon's internal news service as saying in Indianapolis that the number of troops needed was "to be determined."

The moves that were to be announced Wednesday are in line with expectations — a combination of holding some troops in

Iraq longer than scheduled and sending some fresh forces from the United States.

The United States now has about 138,000 troops in Iraq. It is in the midst of swapping out units that have been there for a full year with fresh forces, including the 3rd Infantry Division, which helped spearhead the original invasion and toppling of Baghdad in the spring of 2003.

Officials have said they were considering sending some elements of the 3rd Infantry to Iraq earlier than scheduled, as part of a force-holstering plan. It was not clear Wednesday whether that decision had been made, but some officials suggested it was unlikely.

Security problems are most severe in the so-called Sunni Triangle area north and west of Baghdad, as well as in the capital itself. Voter registration has not yet begun in the more unstable cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

Recently there also has been trouble in the northern city of Mosul. On Wednesday, U.S. soldiers traveling through Mosul on a mission to discuss the January election with Iraqis came under fire at a gasoline station, witnesses said. One U.S. soldier was wounded in the ensuing gunbattle.

Stars and Stripes reporter Lisa Burgess contributed to this report from the Pentagon.



Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry return fire Wednesday during a gunbattle with insurgents in Mosul, Iraq. The soldiers came under fire when they stopped at a gasoline station. One U.S. soldier was injured.

AP

Iraqi president backs Jan. 30 election date

BY SAMEER N. YACOB
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's president, a Sunni Muslim, said Wednesday that elections should be held on time on Jan. 30, giving key support to the timetable despite violence in large parts of the country and calls by some powerful Sunnis to postpone the vote.

U.S. soldiers traveling through Mosul on a mission to discuss the January election with Iraqis came under fire Wednesday when they stopped at a gasoline station, witnesses said. One U.S. soldier was wounded in the ensuing gunbattle.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, meanwhile, met Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders in neighboring Jordan, trying to drum up support for the election, seen as vital for building a democratic government in Iraq.

Insurgents continued to launch attacks. On Baghdad's dangerous airport highway, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden vehicle near two SUVs, wounding three civilians, according to police. One of the SUVs was left lying overturned in the road after the blast, which hit the same spot on the highway

where a suicide bomber rammed a U.S. military convoy a day earlier, wounding several soldiers.

A militant Islamic group, Ansar al-Sunnah Army, claimed in a Web posting Wednesday to have abducted and killed three Iraqis working for the U.S. Marines. "Right away, the mujahideen carried out God's punishment and shot them to death," the group said, warning that all those "who work with the crusader forces" will be treated as harshly as Americans would be.

The persistent violence has raised fears that voting will be impossible in some areas and a major Sunni group has called for a boycott of the election to protest the U.S.-Iraqi offensive on Fallujah last month.

But President Ghazi al-Yawer, who wields considerable influence among Sunni tribal figures, especially in the north of the country, told reporters in Baghdad that he opposed any delay.

"I personally think that there is a legal and a moral obligation to hold elections on the set date," he said. "Legally and morally, we have to abide by the date set for the elections in the country's adminis-

trative law" which mandates a ballot by the end of January.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said it has arrested 210 suspected militants in a weeklong crackdown against insurgents in an area south of Baghdad known as the "triangle of death."

The operation, codenamed Plymouth Rock, was launched in part as a follow-up to last month's assault on Fallujah, the main insurgent bastion 40 miles west of Baghdad. U.S. commanders wanted to cut off escape routes for Fallujah fighters and pacify the troubled region ahead of national elections in January.

Separately, U.S. troops detained 17 suspected militants during a series of raids on Tuesday in and around Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city.

The city's entire 5,000 member police force disintegrated during an insurgent uprising last month, forcing the U.S. command and the interim government to divert troops from the offensive in Fallujah to retake the city.

At least 50 people have been killed in Mosul in the past two weeks — most of them believed to have been supporters of the interim government or members of its security forces.

.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Tuesday, at least 1,253 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 981 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is one lower than the Defense Department's tally.

It's not unusual for the figures to differ slightly from day to day.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, three; Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,115 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 874 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military: ■ One U.S. soldier died Monday from wounds sustained when his patrol was attacked with a bomb near Alqura, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Adam R. Brooks, 20, Manchester, N.H., killed Sunday in Iraq's Babil province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Charles A. Hanson Jr., 22, Panama, Fla.; killed Sunday in Iraq's Babil province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

■ Army Pfc. Stephen C. Benish, 20, Clark, N.J.; died Sunday in Ramadi, Iraq, when he was attacked while on patrol; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Howze, Korea.

■ Marine Cpl. Gentian Marku, 22, Warren, Mich.; killed Thursday in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Ground troops look for help from above

Air Force and Navy jets in Iraq ready to fly to the rescue, 24/7

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

EVERY DAY in Iraq, soldiers or Marines on the ground find themselves under fire.

Convoys are attacked along a lonely highway. Patrols catch the deadly eye of snipers. Something. Somewhere. Daily.

When it happens, the ground pounders get help from above.

"That's our primary mission," said Lt. Col. Steve Langford, an F-16 pilot stationed at Balad. "That's the only reason we're here. It happens 24/7. It can happen anytime."

If not Air Force F-16s, it might be U.S. Navy F-14s or F/A-18s coming to the rescue. Air Force AC-130 gunships are also in the flying arsenal.

But the pilots who put munitions on target are only part of the process.



Capt. Stuart Williamson of the 332nd Expeditionary Air Control Squadron at Balad Air Base, Iraq, explains some of the equipment used to track aircraft in the country. The squadron can speedily help ground troops get needed air support.

The Air Force has 2,500 people at Balad, living along with the Army and sharing many of the same risks, which is unusual for the flying service. Through it all, the standard Air Force mission of providing cover for troops on the ground gets accomplished.

The effort starts with the 332nd Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, out of Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, where it is known as the 660th Air Control Squadron. The squadron's job "is to provide air power to troops on the ground in an expeditionary manner," said Maj. T.J. Courtney, director of operations.

Inside four modules a bit larger than walk-in closets is equipment linked to several radar stations around the country. Screens tell controllers where the aircraft — as many as 70 at a time — are flying. Everything from fighters and tankers to cargo aircraft and commercial airliners fill the skies over Iraq.

The controllers track them all and provide the information to the Air Force's Air Support Operations Center and the Marine's Direct Air Support Center. The centers' locations cannot be revealed for security reasons.

"They can pick the right asset for the right circumstances," said Capt. Stuart Williamson, senior director and air surveillance officer.

For the controllers, the mission is one of constant vigilance. At any moment, something could happen and troops could need air support.

"It's a constant race," Courtney said. The controllers also track tankers flying overhead, directing thirsty fighters to the nearest one, Courtney said, "so the [air] support can stay there as long as the people on the ground need it."

Furthermore, controllers have to watch civilian traffic because Baghdad's airport has been open for several months to civilian aircraft.

Sometimes a Jordanian airliner, for example, might be flying through an area where air power is needed.

"Like that," Courtney said, snapping his fingers, "we have to take that airspace away from them."

That requires coordination with air traffic controllers in the country, a job now being done by other Air Force members.

But even in those dark, cool modules, lit by glowing screens, the squadron members feel a part of the battle on the ground.

"It's a great job," Williamson said. "You get to be right in the middle of it, helping the troops on the ground as it happens."

Tech. Sgt. John Chestnut is one of 23 members of the Ohio Air National Guard's 123rd Air Control Squadron who volunteered when their unit was given the mission.

"To be honest, when you see troops in combat, you say a quick little prayer," he said. Helping them, he said, "is the best part of the mission."

This may be a common mission for the Air Force, but it is performed from an uncommon location — the center of a country engaged in war.

Ordinarily, the airmen and aircraft would be a comfortable distance from the fight, across a national border or two, using their extended reach to assist the cause.

In this war, that's not possible. So the Air Force makes its home in Balad where mortars and rockets have been as common as chipped beef for breakfast.

An airman was killed by a mortar blast in April. Another was severely wounded in September.

More recently, Tech. Sgt. David Hodgen of the 332nd ACS was wounded when a mortar shell landed 15 to 20 feet from where he was riding a four-wheel all-terrain vehicle.

"No sooner do I start it up and give it gas, then — Kaboom!" he said a few days after his wincing hospital stay ended. "I saw the debris, the flash. I felt the heat. I felt the pieces hitting me."

Doctors counted nine wounds from shrapnel or rocks.

"It's amazing it's a miracle I'm alive," he said. The risk is part of the mission and his duty, he said.

"We're in the military. We all know it's a possibility," said Hodgen, a computer technician.

"This is a unique experience for, I'd say, 99 percent of the people out here," said Capt. Lindsay Druz, commander of the 332nd Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. Back home at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, it is known as the 421st Aircraft Maintenance Unit. About 150 members of the unit are at Balad Air Base.

Senior Master Sgt. Geoff Weimer said, "Proximity is important. We're here for a reason."

The job is the same for the maintainers wherever they are: keep the F-16 flying



PHOTOS BY RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Members of the 332nd Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron change an engine in an F-16 Flying Falcon at Balad Air Base, Iraq. The squadron keeps the aircraft flying to help troops on the ground.

Falcons airworthy. Weimer said the motivation in Iraq might be greater because the missions are real, "not just Utah training ranges."

Druz said, "Occasionally, we've had to pull guys off the flight line after their shift had ended. Once they start working on an aircraft, they don't want to stop."

One thing that does make the maintainers stop is the alarm that warns of mortar or rocket attacks. Staff Sgt. Jerome Knights said work ceases until the all-clear is sounded.

"It definitely adds to the degree of difficulty," he said.

The fliers, too, who are trained to go into harm's way, are adjusting to life in a war zone.

"We really haven't done this since the Vietnam War," said Langford, the operations officer for the 421st Fighter Squadron from Hill.

But, he said, when the jets are needed, they are needed now, not later.

The missions are mostly close air support, putting ordnance on targets within a few hundred meters — or closer — of friendly troops.

Sometimes, however, the presence of an F-16 screaming low over the area is enough to bring the threat to an end.

There is a risk, Langford said. The country is teeming with anti-aircraft artillery and surface-to-air missiles that are not kind to fighter jets. No aircraft have been hit by fire during the close air support missions, but it is one more thing to think about while doing a hard, dangerous job.

The satisfaction, however, trumps the risk.

"There's no greater reward than helping out our Army buddies on the ground," he said. "There's nothing better than hearing their voices on the radio after an attack. They're ecstatic."

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensen@mail.strips.com

Report: U.S. generals knew about prison abuse

BY JOSH WHITE

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A confidential report to Army generals in Iraq in December 2003 warned that members of an elite military and CIA task force were abusing detainees, a finding delivered more than a month before Army investigators received the photographs from Abu Ghraib prison that touched off investigations into prisoner mistreatment.

The report, which was not released publicly and was recently obtained by The Washington Post, concluded that some U.S. arrest and detention practices at the time could be "technically" be illegal. It also said coalition fighters could be feeding the Iraqi insurgency by "making grudge enemies" as they conducted sweeps netting hundreds of detainees who probably did not belong in prison and holding them for months at a time.

The investigation, by retired Col. Stuart A. Herrington, also found that members of Task Force 121 — a joint Special Operations and CIA mission searching for weapons of mass destruction and high-value targets including Saddam Hussein — had been abusing detainees throughout Iraq and had been using a secret interrogation facility to hide their activities.

Herrington's findings are the latest in a series of confidential reports to come to light about detainee abuse in Iraq. Until now, U.S. military officials have character-

ized the problem as one largely confined to the military prison at Abu Ghraib — a situation they first learned about in January 2004. But Herrington's report shows that U.S. military leaders in Iraq were told of such allegations even before then, and that problems were not restricted to Abu Ghraib.

Herrington, a veteran of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam, warned that such harsh tactics could imperil U.S. efforts to quell the Iraqi insurgency — a prediction echoed months later by a military report and other reviews of the war effort.

U.S. treatment of detainees remains under challenge.

Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross recently told U.S. military officials that the treatment of inmates held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was "cruel, inhumane and degrading."

Herrington's report, which was commissioned by Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast, the top intelligence officer in Iraq, said some detainees dropped off at central U.S. detention facilities other than Abu Ghraib had clearly been beaten by their captors.

"Detainees captured by TF 121 have shown injuries that caused examining medical personnel to note that 'detainees shows signs of having been beaten,'" according to the report, which later concluded: "It seems clear that TF 121 needs to be reined in with respect to its treatment of detainees."

A group of Navy SEALs who worked as part of the task force has been charged with abuse in connection with the deaths of two detainees they arrested in the field. One died in a shower room at Abu Ghraib on Nov. 4, 2003, a month before Herrington arrived for his review.

A military source who participated in Task Force 20, the predecessor to TF 121, said the task force comprised several 12-man units that had targeted mis-

sions, such as searching for Saddam loyalists and terrorists. TF 20, which had about 1,000 soldiers, incorporated Army Rangers, members of Delta Force and Special Forces units working with CIA agents. They planned their missions nearly autonomously and answered either directly to the theater commander or to officials in Washington, the source said, speaking on the

condition of anonymity because the missions were classified.

Task Force 121 added Navy SEAL units but was slightly smaller overall. Herrington wrote that an officer in charge of interrogations at a high-value target detention facility in Baghdad told him that prisoners taken by TF 121 showed signs of having been beaten.

Herrington asked the officer whether he had alerted his superiors to the problem, and the officer replied: "Everyone knows about it."

While several investigations have been completed into the Abu Ghraib scandal and U.S. interrogation practices in Iraq, an official military inquiry into the detention activities of Special Operations forces has not been released. That probe, headed by Brig. Gen. Richard P. Formica, was expected to be presented to Congress earlier this year, but a Pentagon spokesman said it is ongoing.

Of the Herrington report, a Pentagon official said top generals in Iraq, including Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, who at the time directed U.S. forces there, reported the alleged abuses to officials at U.S. Central Command, which oversees military activities in the Middle East. The official said TF 121 was investigated, but he could not provide results.

"The Herrington report was taken very seriously," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the report has not been released.

U.S. forces plot winter offensive in Afghanistan

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Thousands of U.S. soldiers are preparing an operation against Taliban insurgents to pre-empt an expected spring offensive that could upset plans for Afghan parliamentary elections, a senior American general said in an interview.

The operation will begin within days of the Dec. 7 inauguration of Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's first directly elected president — an event that itself is a potential target, Maj. Gen. Eric Olson told The Associated Press late Tuesday.

"There could be an unhappy coincidence between the enemy's spring offensive and the parliamentary elections," Olson said at the main U.S. base at Bagram, north of Kabul.

He said the aim is to tighten the Afghan-Pakistan border by sending special forces on raids against rebel leaders.

Olson said the offensive — which will cover the entire U.S.-led force of about 18,000 — would attempt to disturb militants in their "winter sanctuaries" so that they will be in no shape to move against the parliamentary vote slated for April.

The military will be "attempting to attack him in the sanctuaries while he's resting and refitting, staging and planning," said Olson, the operational command-

Militants threaten to U.S. citizens

KABUL, Afghanistan — Militants based in Pakistan are planning to infiltrate relief organizations and companies in Afghanistan as part of a plot to abduct U.S. citizens, the American Embassy warned Wednesday. The embassy said the warning, which also cautioned that Americans were at risk from suicide attacks, was based on fresh intelligence that urged Americans to take stringent security precautions.

The Pakistani militants "planned to seek employment with nongovernment organizations or present themselves as construction contractors to gain access to the organizations prior to conducting a kidnapping operation," it said in a note circulated to U.S. citizens. The note did not identify the militant group or the organizations it might target in Afghanistan. It said it was unclear when any attack might take place.

— The Associated Press

er of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The new operation, dubbed Lightning Freedom, follows Lightning Resolve, a security push begun in July to protect the October presidential election, the first vote since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.



Maj. Gen. Eric Olson speaks at the main U.S. base in Bagram, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. Thousands of U.S. soldiers are poised to begin a fresh operation against Taliban insurgents to prevent an expected spring offensive from upsetting plans for fresh Afghan elections, Olson said Tuesday.

Bodies of crash victims on way to U.S.

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Search teams have recovered the bodies of six Americans who died when their plane crashed high in Afghanistan's snow-covered mountains, U.S. military officials said Wednesday.

The plane went down Saturday, but search efforts were complicated by bad weather and difficult terrain, said military spokesman Maj. Mark McCann.

"We regret to report that all six individuals on board the aircraft — the three U.S. civilian crew members and three U.S. soldiers

— were killed in the crash," McCann said.

He said the victims' identities would be released later by the Defense Department and Florida-based Presidential Airways, which had contracted the CASA 212 transport plane to the U.S. Air Force.

A plane carrying the bodies of the six victims back to the United States left Bagram on Tuesday evening, bound for Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, McCann said.

"An investigation will be conducted to determine the cause of

the crash. However, at this time, we have no indication this crash was caused by hostile fire," McCann said.

"The indications we have is that it got into a valley and tried to gain altitude quickly," Maj. Gen. Eric Olson said. "The pilot apparently recognized that we were not going to be able to gain altitude quickly enough and tried to make a very dramatic turn, didn't make it and crashed into a very narrow valley."

The bodies were found amid the debris of the plane in the Hindu Kush mountains, southeast of Bamiyan.

NYC firefighter dies in Iraq attack

BY ERIN MCCLAM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York City firefighter who had responded to the World Trade Center attack was killed in Iraq while serving with the Army National Guard, city officials said.

Sgt. Christian P. Engeldrum, 39, is the first New York firefighter to die in Iraq since the U.S.-led war began. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said, Engeldrum was killed Monday when his vehicle came under attack outside Baghdad.

"I join all New Yorkers in mourning his loss and pray that his family finds comfort in the innumerable ways he touched so many lives," Bloomberg said in a statement.

Another New York firefighter, Daniel J. Swift, 24, was riding in the same vehicle and suffered shrapnel wounds, Bloomberg said. He was in Germany for treatment and was expected to recover.

Both Engeldrum and Swift spent months digging through the rubble of the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Engeldrum was a five-year fire veteran who previously served as a police officer. He was on active duty in the Army from 1986 to 1991.

"He was a great fireman," fire Lt. Brian Horton said at the Bronx firehouse. "He was 100 percent soldier. He loved his country, and he loved being a fireman. He was a lucky man — he got to do what he loved."

Engeldrum is survived by a wife and two sons.



Engeldrum

Saudis want detainees extradited

Interior minister asks Iraq to hand over suspects

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI
The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iraq wants to try foreign fighters and Arabs suspected of funding the insurgency from abroad in Iraqi courts — a plan drawing objections from Saudi Arabia, which has called on Iraq to interrogate then return all Saudi detainees suspected of terror activities.

Iran's interior minister, meanwhile, said Wednesday that participants in a high-level security summit in Tehran of Iraq, its neighboring nations and Egypt agree border control is a top priority. Separately, his Iraqi counterpart said Iraq has called on the ministers and security chiefs to seriously block infiltrators and to stop the flow of money into Iraq to back insurgents.

"We are aware that some of the terrorists infiltrate from neighboring countries, and we call on our neighbors to arrest them and hand them over to Iraq for trial," Iraqi Interior Minister Falah Hassan al-Naqib told reporters Wednesday.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef made clear on Tuesday, however, that his country wants Iraq to hand over all Saudi detainees it is holding under sus-

picion of terror activities, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Prince Nayef was quoted as saying "infiltration by some terrorists into Iraq has happened," according to the agency. "We hope and ask Iraqi authorities that any Saudi citizen they capture, they should take from him whatever they want and then hand him over to us."

"I speak in the name of the kingdom. This is of concern to us," he was quoted as saying. "If we are fully prepared to help Iraq, then this should be taken into consideration. Iraq must not be a place for training terrorists, and they could be Saudis, like what happened in Afghanistan."

A month ago, Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said authorities had 167 Arab foreign fighters in custody. More were arrested in last month's U.S.-led military offensive to clear the city of Fallujah of insurgents. Allawi hasn't given a specific breakdown or more recent figure, but has said foreigners include Syrians, Saudis, Egyptians, Sudanese, Afghans and Moroccans.

Blocking infiltration of terrorists and insurgents into Iraq is the prime focus of the two-day meeting with senior rep-

resentatives from Iraq's neighbors — Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey — as well as Iraq, Egypt and the United Nations.

The gathering, an unusual attempt at high-level coordination in the sensitive area of security, is designed to help participants share intelligence on militant groups suspected of ties to the insurgency in Iraq.

Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari, Iran's interior minister, told reporters Wednesday that the ministers have discussed forming security committees to work out details of tightening borders.

"We agreed to step up security cooperation so that the borders can be controlled better. Border control is a top priority," Lari said on emerging from a closed meeting.

In the opening session on Tuesday, Iraqi Vice President Ibrahim al-Jaafari said blocking infiltration of terrorists was the biggest assistance needed to stabilize Iraq just a month before the first elections since the April 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein.

Prince Nayef, according to the Saudi Press Agency, said participants in the conference also would be discussing a broader problem — those who "infiltrate into Iraq, train for terror operations and return from it, like Afghanistan."

Convoy driver in Iraq keeps focus off danger

BY JACKIE SPINNER
The Washington Post

ON HIGHWAY 1, Iraq — Marine Lance Cpl. Bryan Vitale was racing the sun to the horizon, his choirboy voice singing along to Michael Jackson's "Thriller," which was pounding from the portable speakers lodged against the windshield of his seven-ton truck.

After the sun goes down, the insurgents come out, attacking the military convoys that pass through the dangerous stretch of highway south of Baghdad. Among their preferred targets are trucks — like this one — that haul huge, vulnerable trailers full of highly flammable fuel. But as long as the sun is up, the convoys generally pass through without getting hit with mortar shells, bullets or bombs — generally, because there are no certainties out here on the road.

In the pink hue of the setting sun, a white pickup truck roared along a secondary road that follows Highway 1, where Vitale was fifth in the line of military trucks carrying supplies to his home base in northern Balad province. Vitale, his head slightly cocked, followed the pickup with his gaze. Was it a suicide bomber? Or just a harmless civilian headed home? The pickup sped past and disappeared, and Vitale turned his head back to the highway and tapped his hands against the wheel to the beat of the music.

Vitale is a member of the Transportation Support Detachment assigned to the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. He has made 70 to 75 convoy trips since his unit came to Iraq about five months ago. Each time he heads out, he has no idea whether he is coming back. But Vitale, 24, a self-proclaimed singer and dancer from Freehold, N.J., whose dance idol is pop rocker Justin Timberlake, lets his mind wander elsewhere when he's on the road.

Sometimes he thinks about his girlfriend, sometimes the clothes he wants to buy with his Marine paycheck, sometimes



his 1996 Volkswagen Jetta back home, a car he nicknamed "The Smurf." If he comes back to Iraq on a second tour next year, Vitale said, he would have enough money to buy "The Smurf" a new engine.

"I try not to think about what could happen in the next 30 seconds," Vitale said. "If you stay on your toes too long, it is bad. You go to bed and you can't turn it off."

Vitale said he likes getting away from his post, Forward Operating Base Kalsu, where mortar shells used to rain so frequently that the truckers renamed their motor pool the "mortar pool."

"Everyone else stays on Kalsu," Vitale said. "They don't get to go anywhere, so it's fun being out as long as you're not getting shot at."

When he first came to Iraq, Vitale said, he had a picture of what the country would look like: "Everyone thinks it's a big dirt hole."

But since he began logging miles on his truck, Vitale has seen a different Iraq, one with marshes, irrigated fields, palm trees and canals. "Shame on me," he said quiet-

ly. "Some places are pretty. It's nothing like you would imagine. It makes me a better person being here."

Vitale said he was introduced to music in karaoke bars in the bowling alleys where he hung out with his dad. Later, he joined a church choir. The experiences gave him an "eclectic" taste in music, he said.

He was no scholar in high school, though he could have been if he had studied, he said. After he graduated, he worked at a nursery school before joining the Marine Corps 2½ years ago to earn money for college. He wants to be a teacher.

"Kids are just hilarious," Vitale said. "They just do the dumbest things and the smartest things. I like teaching. It will keep me young."

Vitale has had two close calls on the road, he said, the last one about three weeks ago. A mortar shell landed a few feet from his truck. The shrapnel from the blast punctured his fuel tank and a tire.

When the shell exploded, he ducked low on the seat, breathing hard.

"If it weren't for the bulletproof glass, I'd



PHOTOS BY JACKIE SPINNER/The Washington Post
Left: Lance Cpl. Bryan Vitale, above, tosses a bag of fast food to a fellow truck driver at a military base near the Baghdad airport. The 20-year-old from Freehold, N.J., says he has had two close calls on the road.

be hating life right now," he said. "I don't really worry unless they tell me to worry. If something does happen, all I can do is freak out."

With the sun dipping lower and the countryside blurring into long shadows, the convoy picked up speed. Vitale accelerated to about 65 mph. The truck can go up to 85, he said, but that's too fast to maintain control. "I could hit it, but we'd probably die," he said.

Vitale said he has learned to trust the drivers behind him and in front of him. "There are guys who will freak out and guys who will hang out of the truck shooting," he said.

But that's not what he wants to think about, he said, reaching for a cold soda. Suddenly, in front of the truck, there was an explosion of white. "Are those tracer bullets?" Vitale asked, peering into the dark. "Hey," he said, "they're firework. It's fireworks."

He turned up the music.

Princess, Marine file for divorce

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The five-year marriage between a former Marine and a young Bahraini royal, whose story provided the basis for a made-for-television movie in the United States and upsurge in her home country, is over.

"It was what she wanted," Jason Johnson told the Las Vegas Review-Journal of the divorce he and Meriam Al-Khalifa filed for Nov. 17, the day after their wedding anniversary. He calls them "incompatible in marriage."

Johnson, who had sneaked his beloved into the United States and was court-martialed over the relationship, cast the tale as a "Romeo and Juliet" love affair that disintegrated amid Las Vegas nightlife, opposition by his wife's family, and at least one death threat.

Al-Khalifa was not represented by a lawyer in the divorce filing. No one answered her apartment door Monday and it was unclear whether she planned to stay in the United States.

The story started in January 1999 when Johnson was stationed in Bahrain, an island kingdom off the coast of Saudi Arabia.

Al-Khalifa is one of five daughters of Sheikh Abdullah bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, a distant relative of Bahrain's king, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa.



AP

Meriam Al-Khalifa Johnson, a real-life princess from Bahrain, and her husband, Jason Johnson, a former Marine, answer questions during a news conference in January 2001. The two filed for divorce in Las Vegas in November.

They met at a mall and fell in love, though he was a Mormon and she was a Muslim, forbidden to marry a non-Muslim.

About a year ago, Johnson said, Al-Khalifa left him. He lives now in Las Vegas with his stepmother.

"Deep down inside, she knows that I loved her more than anything in the world," Johnson said.

"I can say I enjoyed every minute I spent with her."

Copter crew asked to use instruments before crash

The Associated Press

DALLAS — The pilot of a military Black Hawk helicopter that crashed in fog, killing seven people including a brigadier general, had good visibility at takeoff but asked air controllers about instrument flight minutes before the crash, the Dallas Morning News reported Wednesday.

The helicopter's pilot contacted controllers at Waco Regional Airport for the instruments-only flight plan, Darrell Meachum, regional vice president for the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, told the newspaper. Pilots use the instruments when visibility is poor.

The helicopter clipped support cables for a TV transmission tower and crashed Monday in a field 30 miles northeast of Fort Hood, killing everyone aboard. The victims were all from the 4th Infantry Division based at Fort Hood.

Col. Donald MacWillie said Tuesday that the Black Hawk was operating under visual flight rules at the time of the crash. He said that decision was based on a weather briefing. Visibility had been good upon departure from Fort Hood for a two-hour journey to the Red River Army Depot near Texarkana.

But Meachum said the crew wanted to switch to using instruments.

"He called us at 6:45," Meachum said. "He reported that he was at 800 feet and interested in an IFR (instrument flight rules) flight plan, and we asked him to state his position.

He said, 'Currently ... stand by, sir.'" Waco controllers never heard back from the pilot, Meachum said.

The helicopter crashed about 7 a.m.

Investigators from the Army Safety Center at Fort Rucker, Ala., were examining the wreckage. An internal investigation will also look into the crash's cause, said Maj. Randy Cephus, 4th Infantry Division deputy public affairs officer.

Lights on the TV tower whose support wires were hit had stopped working last week when strong storms hit the area, said Jerry Pursley, general manager of television station KXXV, the tower's owner.

The station notified the Federal Aviation Administration about the lights, and the agency said the notice was entered into a computer database on potential hazards checked by pilots before they fly.

MacWillie said he wasn't sure if the crew was aware of the FAA bulletin, but he said it was standard procedure for his pilots to keep up with hazard alerts.

Crash victims included Brig. Gen. Charles "Ben" Allen, 49. He was born in Alaska but listed Oklahoma as his home of record. Others killed were the pilots, Chief Warrant Officer 2 David H. Gardner Jr., 32, of Iowa, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mark W. Evans Jr., 27, of Florida; Col. James M. Moore, 47, of Peabody, Mass.; Capt. Todd T. Christmas, 26, of Wagon Mound, N.M.; Chief Warrant Officer 5 Douglas V. Clapp, 48, of Greensboro, N.C.; and Spc. Richard L. Brown, 29, Stonewall, La.



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IN THE STATES

What awaits next chief

By TED BRIDIS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tom Ridge's successor as chief of the Homeland Security Department will have to unify a sprawling bureaucracy, a deadly serious job where failure could put the United States at risk of another terror attack.

Ridge, who announced his resignation Tuesday, acknowledged his frustrations of working out the kinks in the broadest government reorganization in half a century, a job critics say remains largely incomplete. "I like going to work every day," Ridge said, before adding, "There are certain days I've enjoyed it even more."

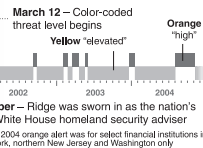
Ridge said he will remain in the job until Feb. 1, unless the Senate confirms his successor earlier. Among those cited as potential candidates are Bernard Kerik, the former New York City police commissioner who helped rebuild Iraq's police force; former Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Joe All-



Ridge resigns

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, who presided over six "orange alerts," announced his resignation Tuesday.

Risk of terrorist attack



Source: Department of Homeland Security

AP

baugh; Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Mike Leavitt; and White House homeland security adviser Fran Townsend.

Others are also believed to be interested in the job, including Asa Hutchinson, undersecretary for border and transportation security in the Homeland Security Department.

Critics said Ridge's legacy is mixed at Homeland Security, a collection of 22 disparate federal agencies with more than 180,000 employees. It includes Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Customs Service, the Coast Guard, the Secret Service and the Transportation Security Administration, with a combined budget of \$36 billion.

"He was dealt an impossible hand," said Richard Clarke, the former top counterterrorism adviser to President Bush who resigned

last year. "He was not allowed to make some of the key decisions about the beginning of the department. I think anyone would have failed under those circumstances."

Although the Homeland Security Department originally was envisioned as a broker of intelligence after the 2001 terror attacks, the Bush administration opted to establish a new terrorist screening center and terrorist threat integration center, set up at the FBI and CIA respectively.

Even loyalists to Ridge acknowledge the next secretary must work to unify the organization, which still uses hundreds of different computer networks for systems such as intelligence, accounting, procurement and hiring. Auditors have complained about the department's spending controls and the security of its own computer networks, and it can take months at Homeland Security to hire key employees for important positions.

Methodists to start trial based on gay clergy law

By RICHARD N. OSTLING
The Associated Press

PUGHTOWN, Pa. — When the Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud told her congregation last year that she lives with a lesbian partner, she set the stage for the United Methodist Church's third trial under a law forbidding clergy who are "self-avowed practicing homosexuals."

Stroud could be defrocked if she loses the trial, expected to begin Wednesday, with a closed-door selection of 13 jurors from regional clergy.

Stroud says she realized she was a lesbian while attending Bryn Mawr College. After graduating from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, she was ordained and assigned in 1999 as associate pastor of Philadelphia's First United Methodist Church of Germantown.

Two years later, Stroud held a "covenant ceremony" with Chris Paige at Paige's Tabernacle United Church in Philadelphia, which is affiliated with both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and United Church of Christ.

Stroud notified her Germantown congregation of the relationship in a sermon on April 27, 2003. "I know that by telling the truth about myself I risk losing my credentials," she said, but decided "my walk with Christ requires telling the whole truth."

Stroud said in an interview that if she is defrocked, the Germantown congregation has already promised that she can continue her current educational, pastoral and preaching work under lay status, though she would no longer be able to preside at baptisms or communion services.

"I'm aware that a lot of folks are watching this case," Stroud said, noting that she and her church have received hundreds of supportive letters, e-mails and



The Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud conducts a Communion and prayer service at her First United Methodist Church in the Germantown section of Philadelphia on Sunday.

phone calls. But "for me it really is a very personal issue."

The Rev. Thomas Hall of Exton, Pa., was assigned by the regional bishop to preside at the church's case. He said the trial involves "any denomination's authority to hold ministers accountable to the sacred trust they have agreed upon" when they were ordained.

The UMC's 1984 law barring "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from the ministry was reaffirmed by a 72 percent vote at the Methodist's General Conference in May.

Given that language, conviction might seem automatic. But last March, a church court acquitted the Rev. Karen Dammann, a pastor in Washington state who also lives openly with a same-sex partner and the Methodist's national supreme court decided it had no power to review the verdict.

Laci Peterson's family takes stand

By BRIAN SKOLOFF
The Associated Press

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — Scott Peterson simply watched as his former mother-in-law rose out of the witness chair and screamed at him for killing his pregnant wife, Laci.

Sharon Rocha, wearing a gold heart-shaped pendant with a picture of her daughter in it, took the stand Tuesday in the penalty phase of Peterson's murder trial. She wrapped up the state's case the same day it began, giving the most emotional testimony of four family members called to the stand. Laci's older brother, younger sister and stepfather also spoke.

"She wanted to be a mother. That was taken away from her," Rocha said to Peterson, who was convicted Nov. 12 for the 2002 murders of his wife and the 8-month-old fetus she was carrying.

Rocha went on, her voice cracking. "Divorce was always an option — not murder," Rocha said in a voice so loud that some jurors jumped. At one point, Peterson dabbed his eyes with a tis-



Rocha

Earlier, prosecutor Dave Harris said Laci's death left a hole in her family's hearts "that can never be repaired."

"When the defendant dumped the bodies of his wife and unborn son into the bay, those ripples spread out and they touched many, many lives," Harris told jurors. The only appropriate punishment, he said, is death.

jurors will recommend whether the 32-year-old former fertilizer salesman should be executed or get life in prison without the possibility of parole for the 2002 murders.

Throughout the testimony, prosecutors displayed photographs of Laci, including one from Mother's Day 2002. Taken a week after Laci's 27th birthday, the picture showed her, her mother and her grandmother.

Rossi governor-elect of Wash. — but not for sure

By DAVID AMMONS
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Republican Dino Rossi was certified as Washington's governor-elect on Tuesday, but the closest gubernatorial race in state history is far from over.

Secretary of State Sam Reed, the state's chief elections officer, certified Rossi's 42-vote victory over Democrat Christine Gregoire.

"A recount is almost a certainty," Reed said after making the re-

sults official. "The candidates and political parties have until 5 p.m. Friday to request and pay for an additional recount."

On Friday, Democrats are expected to request a hand recount of all or part of the 2.8 million ballots, and the Republicans may weigh in as well. The uncertainty could last until Christmas.

Some are even worrying about whether a winner will be known in time for inauguration on Jan. 12. Incumbent Gov. Gary Locke,

a Democrat, did not stand for a third term.

Locke said Tuesday that he hopes a second recount will include the entire state and not just selected areas.

At a news conference in Bellevue after

Reed's announcement, Rossi thanked his supporters and suggested Gregoire consider conceding. He stopped short of calling for her to quit the race, saying, "She has to decide what she wants to do, what she believes is best for the state of Washington."

Gregoire, a three-term attorney general, had been forecast to win with ease and John Kerry and Sen. Patty Murray easily won for the Democrats here. But Rossi, a self-made real estate millionaire and a former state legisla-

tive power, edged Gregoire in both the regular count — by 261 votes — and in the automatic machine recount completed last Wednesday.

Each candidate polled 48.87 percent and each got 1,374 million votes.

"Right now, the state is divided smack down the middle," Gregoire's spokesman, Morton Brillant, said Wednesday. "It's worth taking three (more) weeks to have four years of legitimacy, and that's what is at stake."

Rossi

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Wis. community comforts hunting incident survivors

BY ROBERT IMRIE
The Associated Press

RICE LAKE, Wis. — Two survivors of a deadly deer-hunting confrontation joined a community prayer service where organizers urged people to avoid falling into fear and prejudice in the wake of the shootings blamed on a Hmong immigrant.

Lauren Hesebeck and Terry Willers, whose six friends were killed in the shootings, sat near each other at the service Tuesday organized by area ministers. About 900 people packed the auditorium for the 70-minute service of prayers, Bible readings, music and calls for healing in this town of 8,300 — a community one pastor described as full of "souls exhausted by grief."

"Community support is great," Hesebeck said, a blue organ ribbon pinned to his jacket in memory of his hunting buddies.

"That is about all I want to say," Asked about the emotion of the last few days, Hesebeck, who was wounded in the shoulder, just lowered his head and walked to his seat at the Rice Lake High School Auditorium.

Willers, his neck still in a brace from the wound he suffered, declined to comment.

The six deer hunters gunned down in the confrontation Nov. 21 lived in the Rice Lake area. The last of the funerals was Monday.

Chai Soua Yang, 36, of St. Paul, Minn., has been charged with the shootings.

Salissa Paulette drew groans and sighs of dismay when she said a friend saw a bumper sticker that read: "Save a deer, shoot a Hmong."



Members of the Rice Lake, Wis., community bow their heads during a prayer gathering Tuesday at Rice Lake High School for six hunters killed in northern Wisconsin on Nov. 21.

"We must remember the family of the shooter did not pull the trigger," she said. "Wouldn't God want us to pray for them and try to heal their pain too?"

Hours earlier in Hayward, Vang made his first court appearance under tight security in a basement classroom at the county jail for his own safety. On Monday, prosecutors filed charges accusing him of intentionally killing six hunters and trying to kill Willers and Hesebeck Nov. 21 after Vang was asked to leave the private land where the others were hunting.

Vang, a truck driver and experienced hunter, told investigators he was called racial names during the confrontation, and Willers fired a first shot at him; the survivors

said no one shot at Vang before he opened fire.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled Dec. 29 to determine whether there is sufficient evidence for trial.

Killed were Robert Crotteau, 42; his son Joey Crotteau, 20; Al Laski, 43; Mark Roidt, 28; Willers' daughter Jessica Willers 27; and Dennis Drew, 55.

Laski's 15-year-old son, Adam, received a standing ovation at Tuesday night's service for saying that he and other relatives of the victims have felt an outpouring of love, despite their difficulty in comprehending the losses.

"From the bottom of my heart and from all of the family members of the victims, thank you all," he said.

Research finds women under stress age faster

BY RANDOLPH E. SCHMID
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The immune cells of women under extreme mental stress age faster than those in women not facing such pressure, a new study reports.

While previous reports have linked physical effects with stress, the new analysis helps pinpoint an important focus for these problems.

The study focused on the telomeres in the chromosomes of particular immune cells of 58 women between the ages of 20 and 50.

Telomeres cap the ends of chromosomes and shorten as cells reproduce, a measure of age. When they reach a minimum level the cells can no longer reproduce.

The report, published in Monday's issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found that the telomeres in the cells of women under stress

had undergone the equivalent of 10 years of additional aging, compared to women living more normal lives.

The researchers studied 58 women, 19 of whom were mothers of healthy children and 39 who were tending chronically ill children.

They reported that "the exact mechanism that connect the mind and the cell are unknown."

The researchers said they will now begin work to see if other types of cells are affected by stress.

The research was funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Hellman Family Fund, the University of California at San Francisco, National Institute of Mental Health, National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression, Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Barouk Wellcome Fund and the Dana Foundation.



Matt Strahan, left, meteorologist-in-charge for the National Weather Service office in Key West, Fla., takes a swipe at a pinata symbolizing a tropical cyclone to mark the official end of the 2004 hurricane season Tuesday in Key West, Fla. The event was a facet of the 10-day Pirates in Paradise festival.

Fla. officials may nix Election Day

BY BETH KASSAB
The Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — Florida's election supervisors are proposing one way to make voting easier: Do away with Election Day.

Voters would cast ballots during a span of several days or weeks ending on the traditional voting day, under a plan endorsed Tuesday by supervisors at their meeting in Orlando. The group will now lobby lawmakers for changes during the spring legislative session.

The overwhelming response to this year's 15 days of early voting — when an estimated 2.3 million people cast ballots statewide before Election Day — convinced most supervisors that voters are now demanding new freedom to show up at the time and place of their own choice.

The change would dramatically reform the way the state runs its elections, effectively creating a more streamlined system needing fewer poll workers, precincts and equipment.

Voters would no longer be required to report to assigned precincts, even on Election Day. Instead, people would be able to select from a number of large "voting centers" in their county.

"It's a leap in the way we think about things," said Pasco County Supervisor Kurt Browning. "It would be the logical next step."

Though the proposal is still in its infancy with few

details hammered out, the group of Florida's 67 county supervisors modeled their proposal after one Colorado county's election setup.

Larimer County, Colo., did away with traditional precincts this year and replaced them with "vote centers." Instead of having 190 polling places, officials created 31 vote centers throughout the county.

The cost of bringing the plan to Florida is unknown, Browning said, but it could cut expenses just as supervisors are scrambling to find money to meet new federal and state requirements to improve access for disabled voters and to upgrade voting equipment.

The change would do away with a lot of election headaches, supervisors said, because it would, by some estimates, cut in half the number of polling places.

Orange County Elections Supervisor Bill Cowles said he could replace his 252 precincts with about 80 voting stations where voters from all parts of the county could go to cast ballots.

Fewer polling places would reduce the number of voting machines and would require fewer poll workers, which could cut salary and training costs. It also would reduce the chances of human error and electronic glitches, supervisors said.

One of the only concerns from the group came from those who did not know whether their counties had large enough facilities to host the voting centers for as many as 15 consecutive days.

Devastating hurricane season ends in Florida

BY BILL KACZOR
The Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. — One of the most devastating hurricane seasons in Florida history officially ended Tuesday with Gov. Jeb Bush calling the occasion a time for "reflection and celebration."

Florida was hit by four hurricanes in a single season, a two-month barrage of storms that triggered the nation's biggest natural-disaster response.

The hurricanes took 117 lives in Florida, destroyed more than 25,000 homes and heavily damaged 4,600 more. Damage was estimated at \$42 billion, surpassing the \$34.9 billion caused in 1992 by Hurricane Andrew, the nation's single most costly storm.

Bush toured some of the most severely affected areas, beginning at Escambia County's new emergency operations center.

"This was a historic time,"

Bush said. "As a state we learned a lot about ourselves and it's important to reflect on that. I think Florida is a better place and a stronger place because of this."

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30.

Escambia County Public Safety Director James Kilgore's announcement that the hurricane season was officially over drew a cheer as she introduced the governor, but nature does not always adhere to that schedule. Capping off the freakish year, Tropical Storm Otto formed on the last day of the season far in the central Atlantic, about 800 miles east of Bermuda. It posed no threat to land.

Bush said he would push during a special legislative session for passage of tax relief for people who lost their homes and the elimination of multiple deductibles on insurance policies for those who had damage from more than one hurricane.

Thyroid patients warned on alarms

BY BRYN NELSON
Newsway

Patients treated with radioactive compounds may want to carry a special note from their doctors when traveling — or risk being mistaken for a terrorist.

In a study released Tuesday, researchers found that 29 diagnostic tests and treatments can cause patients to trigger false alarms when they pass radiation detectors like those designed to ferret out smuggled radioactive materials. An estimated 10,000 of these detectors are already in use at borders, ports and airports.

"If you think about it, it's pretty parallel to patients who have metal hip implants setting off metal detectors," said Dr. Lionel Zuckier, a professor of radiology at the New Jersey Medical School in Newark.

Researchers have long noted such side effects in nuclear medicine, in which doctors diagnose or treat medical conditions by directing small amounts of radioactive tagged compounds to specific organs or body tissues.

In the new study, presented in Chicago at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America, Zuckier and his colleagues calculated how long those consequences might last for 29 of the radioactive compounds, known as radiopharmaceuticals.

Iodine-131, used to treat thyroid cancer and hyperthyroidism, yielded one of the longest detection periods after delivery, about 95 days. More unexpectedly, the researchers calculated that several diagnostic compounds, including the thallium-201 tracer used in many cardiac exams, could be detected for a month afterward.

"To me, it's really shocking that really trace amounts can be detected for 30 days," Zuckier said. He said the study highlighted the need for official letters or cards that patients can carry, identifying the nuclear medical procedure, when it was administered, and who should be called to verify it.

Both the Society of Nuclear Medicine and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission have likewise encouraged hospitals to develop a notification system, and Zuckier said many hospitals are already doing so.

Among the more notorious false alarms, a Nuclear Regulatory Commission notice issued last December described a March 20, 2003, incident in which a bus traveling from New York to Atlantic City, N.J., set off a radiation alarm in a tunnel. Eventually, the alarm was traced to a man who had been treated earlier in the day with iodine-131 — and warned not to use public transportation.

Mass. first to scan fingerprints for gun sales

BOSTON — With a quick electronic scan of a fingerprint, gun shop owners in Massachusetts will know immediately if a customer is eligible to buy a weapon, using a system that officials say is the first of its kind in the nation.

The Massachusetts Instant Record Check System, developed over the past six years with nearly \$7 million in information technology grant money, will be in place in all police departments and gun shops across the state by next summer. It is currently operating in three shops and about 140 police departments.

The system allows police and gun shop owners to have instant access to updated arrest warrant and restraining order information, which was not readily accessible under the old paperwork-intensive system.

From The Associated Press



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A martini that sparkles

Hotel offers \$10K piece of 'ice' in cocktail

BY JOSE MARTINEZ
New York Daily News

NEW YORK — At \$10,000, this cocktail is bound to leave you feeling more shaken than stirred.

The Martini on the Rock is the newest addition to the menu at the Algonquin Hotel. It comes with a single piece of ice — a diamond from the in-house jeweler.

"For now, it's just an item on the menu — unless 'she' can convince 'him,'" said Anthony Melchiorri, the hotel's general manager.

Not a single glass has been sold, but hotel officials hope the glittering gimmick catches the eye of a would-be bride or groom.

"This is a great lobby, where you can hang out and talk," Melchiorri said. "Or where you can ask someone to marry you."

The Algonquin once drew literary notables such as Dorothy Parker, whose witticisms included: "I

love a martini — but two at the most. Three, I'm under the table; four, I'm under the host."

"The martini is our trademark," Melchiorri said.

The only catch for big spenders is that the drink order — and diamond purchase — need to be lined up three days in advance with Bader & Garrin, the hotel's jeweler.

The drink is the city's latest overpriced menu item, joining such notables as the \$1,000 frittata at Norma's in Le Parker Meridien hotel, the \$71 hamburger at the Old Homestead and the \$1,000 Golden Opuience Sundae at Serendipity 3. The martini's actual price depends on the size and cut of the rock, but its liquid ingredients — a mix of Belvedere vodka and Martini & Rossi vermouth — remain as classic as ever.

"We were laughing," said businessman Travis Hawton, 33, of Minneapolis, "about how someone will probably try to sneak one in on an expense account."

Support growing to overturn ban on foreign-born presidents

BY DONNA CASSATA
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's founding fathers envisioned a president born in the United States of America.

In 1787, they put it in writing — Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution: "No person except a natural born citizen ... shall be eligible to the office of president."

More than 200 years later, in a diverse nation with more than 33 million immigrants, the push is on to alter that venerable document and allow naturalized U.S. citizens — Americans like Arnold Schwarzenegger from Thal, Austria, and Jennifer Granholm from Vancouver, British Columbia — to become president.

The number of foreign-born in the United States is increasing at a rapid pace: more than 1 million a year between 2000 and 2004, according to a recent study. Those



AP photos

Austrian-born Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, left, and Canadian-born Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm would be eligible for the presidency should one of several measures introduced in Congress that propose extending eligibility for the presidency to certain immigrants become law.

millions, however, aren't the ones some proponents of the constitutional change have in mind.

Think California Gov. Schwarzenegger. Perhaps Michigan Gov. Granholm.

Several measures have been introduced in Congress, including a joint resolution by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican, and Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican, which proposes a constitutional amendment that would extend eligibility for the presidency to immigrants who have held U.S. citizenship for at least 20 years.

Schwarzenegger became a citizen in 1983, Granholm in 1980.

Prohibiting foreign-born Americans from occupying the White House is "hard to justify in a nation where there are so many people who have become naturalized citizens," said Mark V. Tushnet, a professor of constitutional law at the Georgetown University Law Center.

Among those who think it won't happen is Schwarzenegger's wife, Maria Shriver.

"Forget about it," California's first lady says in an article in the

January edition of Vanity Fair. "It is not going to happen. The process takes years, and this is as far as it goes."


The odds are against proponents of the change, which would require two-thirds majority votes in the House and Senate, then approval by three-fourths of the states.

Part of the problem, according to proponents, is a post-Sept. 11, 2001, climate in which many Americans are wary of immigrants, even legal ones, and want to tighten immigration laws.

A recent CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll found that 67 percent opposed changing the Constitution to allow immigrants to be president. When half the poll sample was asked the same question with Schwarzenegger's name, opposition dropped slightly to 58 percent.

Proponents also must contend with the political impression that the nascent movement is being mounted for one Republican.

"Democrats may be nervous putting in place a constitutional amendment that might have the immediate impact of promoting Governor Schwarzenegger's candidacy," Tushnet said.



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LT. COL. CYRIL J. SOCHA, Commander

Travel restrictions necessary

Recently a soldier aired some frustration regarding travel limitations imposed on soldiers in Kuwait. "Locked down in Kuwait," letter, Nov. 25).

The soldier implied that our commanders have restricted movement in the country under the guise of ambiguous security threats assessed by what he perceives to be an untrustworthy intelligence community.

As a member of the command on Camp Arifjan who receives current intelligence reports daily, let me assure the writer and all of our soldiers in Kuwait that the travel restrictions are absolutely necessary and that our commanders did not make this decision lightly or was it driven by a desire to pre-empt potential behavior problems. The safety and security of every soldier is our paramount concern. The details of these threats in this area of operation are real and available to any soldier in this command with the proper clearance.

As to why civilians and others are allowed to travel with fewer restrictions, I would respond simply that these individuals do not fall under our command; however, we do recommend they follow similar practices. These individuals are only responsible for themselves, unlike the Army leaders here. Good leaders understand that soldiers need to have time for recreation that is why there are so many facilities available here. The numerous Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities throughout Kuwait are great places for soldiers to unwind.

I would ask that the writer consider his circumstances against those of many of our soldiers stationed in Iraq in order to better appreciate his situation.

Col. Brick T. Miller
Commander, Area Support Group Kuwait
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

'Mortarville' is a misnomer

Several of us have been on Logistics Support Area Anacosta during the time the article "Daily attacks on base bids it 'Mortarville'" (Oct. 18) refers to, and we just don't see it the way the writer describes it.

I have been in the military 24 years and my understanding of the terms used in the article differ. So, to be just, I looked them up in Webster's New World Dictionary:

■ **barriage**: n. 1: artillery fire that holds down the enemy while the army attacks; 2: any pronged attack.

■ **attack**: v. 1: to make an assault; n. 1: an attacking; 2: any hostile action, esp. with troops.

I don't see any of this happening on LSA Anacosta. We do get harassing fire of one to two rounds, sometimes several times a day; and we have had some casualties, but this is what happens in situations like this. Compared to other bases in Iraq, this is very low key.

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Also, another term should be considered when referring to the harassing fire on LSA Anacosta: "miss" or "missed," as in, "They missed the base."

■ **miss**: vt. 1: to fail to hit something; 2: to fail to be successful; 3: to misfire; said as of an engine; n. a failure to hit, obtain, etc.

Anacosta is a good base and will continue to develop into a great garrison environment. If units will stay in their lane and do their mission, then the base will improve and the surrounding areas will come to enjoy the prosperity from having this large base here.

Master Sgt. Darrell E. Weaver
Logistics Support Area Anacosta, Iraq

Tribute to her family

It may be just a few weeks before Christmas but, not surprising, this year is lacking some of the usual holiday cheer. It been through this year, being a soldier in the middle of a war. As the holidays creep through, we are missing our families greatly as we think of them carrying on the traditions we remember so fondly in our memories.

This past Thanksgiving, I found myself most thankful for my family, for their greatest contribution of fulfillment in my life: their love.

Would they ever understand the feelings that are so warmly placed upon my heart as I anxiously await and finally receive their package, letter or that simple e-mail? Blessed is what I would consider myself to be as part of this group of individuals.

It is always this same group in which I have instilled such trust, as they show me every day what loyalty really is. We are not only connected through blood but also through love, our life experiences and the opportunity to grow together.

We have an understanding that constant motivation and encouragement are what it takes to pursue the rough moments and enjoy the good days, as well.

This holiday season, I, along with thousands of other soldiers, cannot be home with our families, but warm memories are what keep us marching forward.

It is my family who every day help me back on my feet. They brush me off, give me back this motivation and courage I need to have, and make me want to fly for them.

Spc. Angelina Wiger
Camp Warhorse, Iraq

Raise gas prices last

I just read "Gas," diesel fuel prices across Europe to rise," (article, Europe edition, Nov. 30).

I recall a couple of years ago when the Army and Air Force Exchange Service stated how it did have higher gas prices, however, consumers could save on other items such as diapers.

Well, I have an idea: If AAFES can supplement prices from one product against another, then how about raising the price of alcoholic beverages and lowering the price of gas?

I consume alcohol; however, as with baby diapers, only some consumers use these products. But everyone with an automobile has to use fuel.

The prices of alcohol in America are much higher than here at our on-post shops, but I'll bet that if a survey were taken that asked would one rather pay higher prices for alcohol vs. gas, the answer would be higher prices for alcohol. That way, one could afford to drive to work and not even have a hangover.

How about it, AAFES?

Charles C. Jones
Schweinfurt, Germany

Thanks for supporting Marines

I am taking this opportunity to thank the Department of Defense Dependents Schools Europe principals and European Area office, as well as the SHAPE American Elementary School staff for their support of the Marines in 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment during this holiday season.

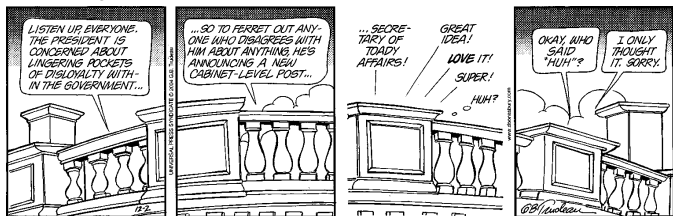
The DODDS principals and SHAPE American Elementary School staff have generously supported efforts to provide many health and comfort items for the Marines in the 3rd Platoon, who are fighting in the western Iraqi desert. Such common, everyday things as toothpaste and toothbrushes, packets of tissue, pens and writing materials — as well as packaged snacks — become luxuries in this isolated and war-torn environment.

The young men in Company B will not be home for the holidays, but their family are not forgotten by those of us who are supporting them as they fulfill their mission in support of a free Iraq.

Joseph J. Caruselle
Principal
SHAPE American Elementary School
Casteau, Belgium

By GARRY TRUDEAU

Doonesbury



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OPINION

Anchor's move makes things Rather clear

As any professor of journalism will tell you, television was once expected to put newspapers out of business. That didn't happen (for which I am duly thankful), but it certainly thinned the herd of afternoon papers.

Philip Terzian

When I was learning to read, the prestige newspaper in Washington, D.C., was the Evening Star—which finally disappeared, after years of limping along, 23 years ago. TV news didn't replace newspapers, but one look at USA Today, or a typical front page in Anywhere USA, makes its influence palpable.

It's two generations later, and we're wrestling with the effects of cable television and the Internet. Both were expected to supplant newspapers and, quite possibly, the then-Big Three TV networks: NBC, CBS and ABC. But that hasn't happened, either.

So life goes on. But it cannot be said that cable and the Internet have failed to influence the market. Television was first seen a revolutionary tool for education; few anticipated its effect on politics. Similarly, cable television and the Internet have sparked a revolution in journalism that no one expected. And if you don't believe me, ask Dan Rather.

Last week Rather announced that he will step down as anchorman of the "CBS Evening News" in March, having served as the network's principal news reader since 1981. (He will continue to be a correspond-

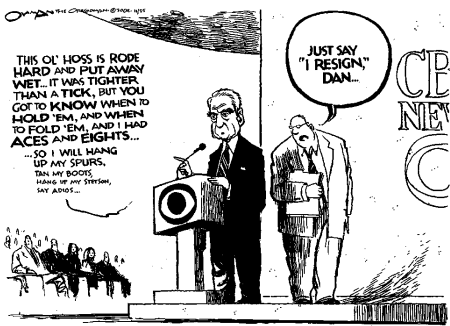
ent for the popular "60 Minutes.") In the normal course of things, a 73-year-old's decision to quit a job is not entirely unexpected. But I am willing to bet that the decision was not his.

Dan Rather has long been accused of political bias, and the revelation that a sensational "60 Minutes" story about George W. Bush's National Guard service was based on falsified evidence was probably one upwar too many for the network brass. Rather will be on his way to retirement (or past it) from anchorman when an independent inquiry into the disaster releases its findings.

There isn't enough space here to enter the argument about whether CBS, ABC and NBC—and most "mainstream" media in America—lean toward the left. My own view is that the evidence for it is substantial, and the explanation is simple: For whatever reason, journalism attracts more people on the left than on the right, and its institutional watchwords and biases are tilted accordingly.

But the fact is that Dan Rather has tended to aggravate right-wing nerves more consistently than his colleagues at ABC (Peter Jennings) and NBC (Tom Brokaw), and when that "60 Minutes" story was broadcast, the dan finally burst. Cable TV (especially Fox and MSNBC) and the Internet, in particular, exploded with dissenting views, pointed questions, contrary evidence and credible allegations of fraud.

In the good old days, such anger and frustration would have been largely impotent, widely scattered, and safely ignored by CBS. No longer. The clamor on the Internet soon migrated to cable TV and grew so insistent that the "mainstream" press could no longer afford to ignore the noise.



If this were 1969, and not 2004, CBS might have reacted as it did when its famous documentary, "The Selling of the Pentagon," was criticized for deception and multiple errors. Citing a combination of the First Amendment, the people's right to know and professional self-regard, CBS airily dismissed its detractors and stood by its story. But that was 35 years ago. Jonathan Klein, a former vice president of CBS News (and the new president of CNN), derided bloggers and guys in their pajamas surfing the Net, as Rather cited "partisan" critics, adding that "if any

definitive evidence to the contrary of our story is found, we will report it." Finally, they did, sort of—two weeks after everyone else had done so.

As far as journalism is concerned, this is not to say that cable TV and the Internet are unmix blessings. But the mortification of CBS, and Dan Rather's timely retirement from anchorman, affirm a familiar truth: Competition pushes journalism—like any product—to higher standards.

Philip Terzian, The Providence (R.I.) Journal's associate editor, writes a column from Washington.

Senator knows most Floridians side with Scouts

In their collective group-therapy sessions, Democrats should pay attention to how their only major officeholder in the nation's key battleground state is trying to survive politics.

Peter A. Brown

Sen. Bill Nelson, the sole statewide-elected Democrat in Florida, has decided that one way to get re-elected in 2006 is to side with the Boy Scouts against gays and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Seems an obvious choice to me, but one assumes in Democratic circles it has caused much angst. However, Nelson is just learning from the master: William Jefferson Clinton, who had the genius to confront Democratic interest groups when they stood between him and the middle class—and victory at the polls.

These are many of the folks who fret about the Bush economy and worry about the war in Iraq or think the country is on the wrong track, but don't think Democrats share their values. That's why George W. Bush is in the White House and the Republicans control Congress.

Nelson understands that millions of Americans think the Democrats often hang with the wrong crowd and that, in the inevitable political conflicts, the party has made poor choices because of those friendships. He realizes the best way to dissuade voters of that notion, at least in his case, is to publicly embrace a sworn enemy of those very same interest groups.

That's why Nelson is trying to help the Scouts resist efforts by the lousy left to restrict the group's ability to function.

And let's not be overly cynical here. The

political benefits to Nelson are apparent to anyone with a brain, but he deserves credit, too, for deciding the Scouts' good works make them worth championing.

The U.S. Supreme Court has told the ACLU it can't make Scouts accept homosexual leaders or stop them from requiring Scouts to believe in God. Talk about sore losers! Since then, the ACLU and allied groups have sought to nix the Scouts' death.

Lefty groups have pressured charities to cut off money to the Scouts, and allied lawyers have looked for every excuse to cause trouble for them.

The ACLU & Co. don't like that the Scouts exclude gay leaders for young boys and require that members believe in God. In red states, these notions are as American as apple pie.

Last month, the Pentagon agreed to warn its military bases not to directly sponsor Scout troops. The military did it to settle an

allegation that the government was engaging in religious discrimination because Scouts must acknowledge the existence of a (nonsectarian) supreme being.

In the ACLU worldview, that is a gross violation of the rights of atheists and, perhaps more important, it symbolizes a mentality the group would like to see banished from our shores.

Nelson... gets an A for understanding his constituents—the same folks Democrats need to win national elections....

Nelson has embarked on a tour of Florida in which he is meeting with Scout organizers to assure them that they will continue to get indirect military help in their efforts. He tells them that military personnel still can sponsor Scout troops on their own time and use military bases for meetings.

And he introduced a resolution urging not just that the Pentagon support the Scouts, but that it fund their jamborees. The resolu-

tion passed the U.S. House of Representatives 391-3, with the only dissenting votes from Democrats with the safest of seats. Nelson says that if the resolution doesn't work, he'll get the support cranked into law.

Nelson is taking a page from the gospel of winning elections in the South laid down by Clinton. In 1992, Clinton picked a fight with Jesse Jackson to demonstrate his independence from black leaders who historically have been strong Democratic supporters, but whose policies and personalities have often alienated the much larger number of white voters.

We'll see if Democratic activists hold Nelson's coyness up to the Scouts against him. If they do, the Republicans will be thrilled to see even more Democratic political correctness. As they say in treatment, the first step toward rehabilitation is admitting the problem.

Peter A. Brown is an editorial page columnist for the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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IN THE WORLD

Protecting women focus of World AIDS Day

BY ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS
The Associated Press

GENEVA — From Armenia to Zambia, activists turned out by the thousands for World AIDS Day on Wednesday, singing in mighty cathedrals, lighting candles in city squares and playing sports.

The United Nations has dedicated this year's observance to improving protection for women and girls. Nearly half of the 39.4 million people infected with HIV worldwide are female.

"Prevention methods such as the ABC approach — Abstinence, Be faithful and use Condoms — are good, but not enough to protect women where gender inequality is pervasive," said Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS.

"We must be able to ensure that women can choose marriage, to decide when and with whom they have sex and to successfully negotiate condom use," Piot added.

As the day began in Asia, where the disease has claimed 540,000 lives this year, campaigners in Japan and South Korea handed out condoms. Thailand, Vietnam, and Bangladesh had marches.

In China, a rare visit by President Hu Jintao to AIDS patients in a hospital was televised.

In Pakistan, about 400 aid workers discussed how to empower women in a region where men usually have a dominant role in society.

At the forefront of the pandemic in southern Africa, red ribbons were tied to lamp posts and draped over buildings. Zambians gathered for a candlelight memorial service in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in the capital, Lusaka.

Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of South Africa appealed for tolerance.

"HIV/AIDS is not God's punish-

ment of the wicked," Ndungane told a rally in Cape Town. "AIDS is a preventable, treatable and manageable disease — no more, no less."

Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika said he wants at least 1 million of his 11 million people to be tested for HIV by the end of next year so his government can determine how many need anti-retroviral treatment.

Eastern Europe, where AIDS figures have jumped since the collapse of the Soviet Union, joined in the observance. Events in Armenia included a concert with well-known local artists.

In the Croatian capital of Zagreb, activists handed out condoms and sold Christmas cards made by AIDS-infected children.

Portugal, which has one of the highest rates of new AIDS infections in western Europe, opened the new headquarters of an association to support AIDS patients.



Kenyan children hold flags to promote HIV/AIDS awareness at a public rally Wednesday in Nairobi, Kenya, for World AIDS Day. The National AIDS Council of Kenya warned that the AIDS situation is worsening in Kenya because of a lack of awareness about the dangers of unprotected sex.

Activists trick luxury restaurants

ROME — Anti-war activists in northern Italy have been indulging in a rather comfortable kind of protest, treating themselves to extravagant meals in top restaurants and leaving the bill unpaid.

Pretending that they were celebrating a baptism, almost 50 activists died Tuesday at the Da Celeste restaurant near Treviso in northeastern Italy, ordering several courses each and washing them down with five bottles of Moët & Chandon champagne, the owner told private TV channel Sky on Wednesday.

Celeste Tono said the unpaid bill came to around \$3,992. Tono said he reported the incident to the police.

British fund-raiser nears end of trek

SYDNEY, Australia — A former British soccer player pedaled through Sydney's early morning traffic Wednesday as he neared the end of a 2,700-mile coast-to-coast odyssey on a penny-farthing bicycle.

Leukemia survivor Lloyd Scott cycled from the west coast city of Perth, Sydney in 10 days, braving soaring temperatures, bumpy roads and even exploding truck tires.

He was due to complete his trip Thursday by taking his bike — with its giant front wheel and tiny back wheel — for a sightseeing tour of some of Sydney's most famous landmarks.

Scott is using the bike ride to raise money for a leukemia charity. He started the ride looking like a super-sleuth Sherlock Holmes in tweed clothes and a deerstalker hat — the clothes came from the same era as his 19th-century bike.

City holds pageant to pick Santa Claus

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Can you imagine Santa Claus in a swimsuit? Luckily, the contestants in Hungary's National Santa Claus Beauty Pageant this weekend will get to keep their clothes on — and their beards, too.

The city of Nyiregyhaza will hold its fifth beauty contest for Santas on Saturday, and so far 13 St. Nick's have signed up, hoping to win an assortment of goods, including a holiday in Tunisia, luggage sets and DVDs.

They'll face a tough panel of judges: Local schoolchildren between the ages of 6 and 10.

Besides the style of their white beards and hair, Santas also are graded on their red outfits and must give a 3-4 minute performance — a song, a fairy tale, a poem — featuring their talents.

Some contestants rely solely on their own skills, while others bring along crews of Santa's helpers, including angels and elves, to impress the judges. While costume rules don't exclude Santas with fake beards and wigs, they stand little chance of winning.

"The kids seem to prefer Santas with their own beards and white hair," pageant organizer Bela Balogh said. "They take their roles on the jury very seriously."

Swiss conductor misses her own train

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — Even employees of the famously punctual Swiss railroads can miss a train.

Last week, a train left the station at Aigle, in the French-speaking west of Switzerland, without its conductor and with its doors wide open. The Swiss railroad company confirmed Tuesday.

The conductor, an unidentified woman, hailed a cab and was finally able to join the train at Bex — some 6 miles further down the track — where it had stopped to wait for her, the Swiss daily Le Matin reported.

From The Associated Press

Bush thanks Canadians for 9/11 help

By DEB RIECHMANN

The Associated Press

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia — President Bush declared Wednesday that both the United States and Canada have a vital interest in the success of democracy in Iraq and said "a new day of freedom, of hope and self-government is on the way."

"Our enemies have defied their intentions and so have we," Bush told an audience in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "Peaceful nations must keep the peace by going after the terrorists and disrupting their plans and cutting off their funding."

"Two years ago, we disagreed about the best course in Iraq," the president acknowledged. But he said that both Canada and the United States know what's at stake.

Bush, continuing a hemispheric fence-mending trip north of the U.S. border in a country where opposition to the U.S.-led war to oust Iraq's Saddam Hussein has been fierce, said that Washington and Ottawa now agree essentially about how to "go forward."

"There's only one way to deal with enemies who plot in secret," he said. "We must take the fight to them. We must be relentless and we must be steadfast in our duty to protect our people."

Bush also said that it is "cultural condescension" to think that democracy cannot work in the broader Middle East.

He praised Prime Minister Paul Martin as a strong leader and said he looked forward to a "strong partnership" with Canada in his second term.

Noting that some 33,000 passengers on diverted U.S. commercial flights got stuck in Canada in the wake of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, he said, "Canadians came to the aid of men and women and children who were worried and confused with nowhere to eat and sleep."

"How does a person say thank you to a nation?" he said.

"Well, that's something a president can do. So let me say directly to the Canadian people ... Thank you for your kindness to us in a crisis in an hour of need."

Bush said he believes the people of the United States and Canada will remain close, as they have over time, "beyond the words of politicians and the natural disagreements that national leaders will have."

Hundreds of people lined the roads to get a glimpse of Bush as his limousine and long trailing entourage made their way into Halifax on an overcast day. The vast majority displayed no feelings toward Bush and merely watched respectfully.

Ukraine opposition ends siege of capital

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko signed a compromise agreement Wednesday that obliged his supporters to lift their siege of government buildings, but he said they would stay in the streets until a deal is reached on a new vote.

After talks with the presidential runoff's officially declared winner, Viktor Yanukovich, outgoing President Leonid Kuchma and European envoys, Yushchenko proposed that a new vote be held by 19 to resolve the crisis over the disputed balloting.

It was not immediately clear whether Yushchenko was calling for a re-vote of the Nov. 21 runoff that pitted him against Yanukovich or a new first round, with other candidates taking part. His supporters have pressed for a

re-vote of the runoff, while Kuchma has said a whole new election should be held.

Under the agreement Yushchenko signed together with Kuchma and the envoys, the blockade that has paralyzed the government — surrounding the presidential administration, the Cabinet in Kiev — must be lifted immediately.

It was unclear whether the agreement extended to massive pro-Yushchenko protests in Kiev's central square, but Yushchenko said that his supporters wouldn't let up until the conflicting parties agree on terms for a new vote.

"Protests in the streets will of course continue," Yushchenko said after the talks at the Marinsky Palace presidential residence. "They would be lifted only after a date is set for a new election and changes introduced into the election law."

Yushchenko has refused to recognize the official runoff results, claiming widespread fraud. Hundreds of thousands of Yushchenko's supporters have flooded Kiev's streets and surrounded official buildings since the vote.

According to the compromise agreement, a group of lawyers would be convened immediately to null over changes of Ukrainian law in a bid to resolve the crisis. Yushchenko told reporters the lawyers must come up with proposals within 24 hours.

Yushchenko, Yanukovich and other participants in the talks also emphasized the need to prevent any actions that could split the country. Participants in the talks emphasized the need to avoid the use of force and said the next round of talks would be held after the Supreme Court rules on the opposition's appeal against the official vote results.

A statue of Alexander the Great stands in Thessaloniki, Greece. The Oliver Stone movie "Alexander," which opened in the States last week, has been criticized by a group of Greek lawyers. They are angry at the portrayal of the legendary warrior king as bisexual.

AP



'Alexander' not Great in Greece

BY PARIS AYIOMAMITIS

The Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Alexander the Great, who carved out a vast empire east of Greece before his death at 32, is idolized in

this nation as a symbol of its ancient glory.

No less than 29 streets in Athens are named after him.

So when director Oliver Stone's new epic about the conqueror's life depicted him as a bisexual who has a fling with his childhood friend Hephaestion, the portrayal hit a raw nerve in Greece.

A group of 25 Greek lawyers has threatened to sue the movie's producers over what they describe as a distortion of history — but insist the protest is not aimed at gays.

"I want to stress we have nothing against gays or lesbians. We respect their rights as everybody else's," said Yiannis Varnakos, the head of the lawyers' group.

"We would have reacted the same way if the issue didn't involve homosexuality," he said. "We just don't want a distortion of historical facts."

The lawyers are calling on the filmmakers, Warner Bros., to carry a disclaimer that the movie is a fictional portrayal of Alexander's life.

On Tuesday, they withdrew a request to delay the movie's release in Greece, agreeing to suspend the action until they watch a preview screening of "Alexander" before it opens in Greece on Friday.

Gay-rights campaigners have condemned the lawyers' campaign, contending it is a clear case of homophobia disguised as a quest for historical truth.

"When it comes to the sorts of matters, Greece is stuck in the middle ages," said Athanasios Vessis, manager of the only gay book store in Greece.

"Everyone knows homosexuality was something natural in ancient Greece," he said. "I don't see the reason for all the fuss."

A quiet effort under way in Greece to bring gay issues into open debate is being met with increased public hostility. Last month, talk shows were dominated by an argument about whether to remove a gay participant from a reality TV show. The debate centered mostly around his homosexuality.

In Stone's 173-minute film, Alexander has an intimate relationship with childhood friend and cavalry commander Hephaestion.

Historians say ancient Greek men often had sexual partners of either gender and many argue Alexander was no exception.

Stone's consultant on the movie, British historian Robert Lane Fox, wrote in his 1973 book, "Alexander the Great": "Alexander was only defeated once, the Cynic philosophers said long after his death, and that was by Hephaestion's thighs."

Varnakos challenged Fox to explain his conclusions, since none of the sources of Alexander's contemporaries survive. Suggestions that Alexander had male lovers, he said, are based on accounts given more than 300 years after his death.

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Inheritance claim

CA LOS ANGELES — The illegitimate son of a wealthy South Korean industrialist has filed a federal lawsuit claiming he was denied an inheritance after being given up for adoption in California 18 years ago.

Peter Roach, 26, sued his father's company, five half-siblings and others alleging fraud, negligence and emotional distress. He is seeking \$5 million, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Roach is the son of now-deceased industrialist Won Man Lee, founder of Kolon Industries Inc., and club hostess Mee Yoon Lee, whom he met in 1977 and took as a mistress for several years, the newspaper reported.

Kolon, a synthetic fibers and engineering plastics manufacturer, has annual sales of more than \$1 billion.

Loggers protest law

ME MADISON — Loggers throughout Maine say they're worried that a law meant to curtail liquidation harvesting in the state's forests will make it difficult for smaller operations to find wood next year when it takes effect. The law, supported by the Department of Conservation, bans the purchase of land for the purchasing of wholesale harvesting of trees without regard to long-term forest-management principals.

Horse upsets teach-in

FL LUTZ — Waiting for surgery, his arm broken, 5-year-old Michael Ruiz couldn't get angry at the 1,000-pound gelding that fell on him.

Michael was among about 125 Schwarzkopf Elementary School kindergartners for whom the usually serene Great American Teach-In got scary.

They were sitting around Attache, a 20-year-old American Saddlebred, when he got spooked, lurched forward, lost his footing and fell on his side.

As the horse scrambled to get up, the trainer tried to get it under control and teachers quickly tended to the students. Afterward, about a dozen students complained of bumps, bruises or other injuries.

Robbery in vain

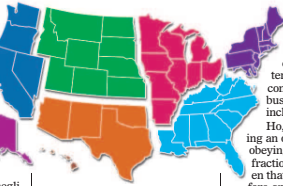
NC RALEIGH — A robber's crime was foiled when he couldn't find anything to steal.

Just after closing, an intruder shot the lock off the door of a Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q restaurant. The man climbed through the broken glass door and combed the fast-food restaurant for items to take, said police Lt. T.L. Earnhardt, but could not break into the cash register.

Employees who were still in the restaurant escaped out the back door. The man fled before police arrived.

Grandma faces drug trial

ME BANGOR — The grandmother of a Corinna man sentenced to 13 years in prison for burying 8 pounds of cocaine on her property has pleaded not guilty to



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

drug trafficking.

Jeanne E. Rogers, 64, entered her plea in Penobscot County Superior Court. Rogers was arrested in connection with the drug trafficking operation her grandson, 25-year-old Jason Belmer, ran.

When police seized cocaine that was buried in Rogers' pool shed in September, Belmer fled and was the subject of a nationwide search for six weeks. He eluded police in Maine, Colorado and Kansas.

A trial date has not been set for Rogers, and details of her alleged involvement in her grandson's drug operation were not available.

Bus just too tall

NY NEW YORK — A tour bus that was four feet too tall to clear a highway overpass in New York City slammed into it, injuring some of the 49 passengers, authorities said.

Most injuries were minor, though two passengers were hospitalized — a boy with a crushed windpipe and a woman who suffered chest pains, the Fire Department said.

The accident happened as the bus from Canada was traveling southbound on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive in Manhattan.

Police said the driver, Yu Yuk



Ready for riding

Red Mountain Fox Hounds junior member Dana McWilliams, 12, tries to fix a stirrup as her mount muncies on some fresh grass near Roughton, N.C. She was one of about 30 riders who took part in the Red Mountain Fox Hounds hunt.

Ho, ignored signs warning that vehicles higher than 9 feet 6 inches would not clear the overpass, a temporary structure for a construction project. The bus measured 13 feet 6 inches.

Ho, 56, was cited for driving an overweight vehicle, disobeying a sign and other infractions. Ho said he had driven that stretch of the FDR before and did not expect to encounter the overpass.

Blessed nuptials

WA TACOMA — There may not have been room at the inn, but they'd better make room at the altar.

Shortly after a performance of the Nativity at the Metropolitan Ballet of Tacoma, Dan Larson, portraying Joseph, got down on one knee and asked Amanda Thaut, "Will you marry me?"

Thaut, who played Mary, quietly gasped, "Yes."

The audience at the Pantages Theater was stunned. One of the wise men pumped his fist in the air and the shepherds and angels could barely contain their enthusiasm.

"I started planning it more than a year ago," Larson, 25, said later. "I wanted to make it something very special. Every part of my life is better because of her."

Leadfoot trucks

KY PIKEVILLE — A state crackdown on overweight coal trucks is having a side effect — more trucks exceeding the speed limit.

Kentucky Vehicle Enforcement commissioner Greg Howard said trucks can go faster when they're not bogged down with overweight loads, and some truckers may be taking advantage of that to speed up to haul more loads each day.

"We are beginning to get some complaints on speed, and we're addressing those," Howard said. "Of course, speed is easier to enforce than weight limits."

Howard said the number of overweight trucks has been drastically reduced in eastern Kentucky since the crackdown began, based on the number of violations officers are seeing.

Suspected rock-thrower

ME WESTBROOK — A 16-year-old juvenile from Portland is believed to be the person who threw a rock from a Maine Turnpike overpass that cracked the windshield of a Maine State Police cruiser, injuring the trooper at the wheel, authorities said.

Trooper Duane Doughty was driving north at about 10 p.m. when the rock came crashing down from the Brighton Avenue overpass, said Stephen McCausland, spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety.

Although the windshield did not shatter, Doughty was showered with glass fragments that struck his face and an eye. He was treated at Maine Medical Center for facial abrasions and was scheduled to see an eye specialist to determine the extent of any eye injuries, McCausland said.



Clowning around

A child dressed as a clown makes a face at parade watchers during the

32nd annual Children's Parade in downtown Dayton, Ohio.



Taking it all in

Jade Eitner watches members of the USA Ballet company run through a practice of their upcoming performance of " 'Twas the Night Before Christmas" at the Academy of Ballet in Alamogordo, N.M.



A canine Christmas

Baylee, a 3-year-old Pekinese-Pomeranian mix, sits for a portrait on Santa's lap at PetCo in Great Falls, Mont.



Preparing to leap
Festival in Flint.

Ralph Arellano of Flint, Mich., waits to catch his granddaughter, Riley Arellano, 3, from the "Friendly Frog," during the Applewood Fall Festival in Flint.



Dinner invitation

Kasprzycki of Alma, Ark., asks a white-fronted goose, "Do you want some bread?" Kasprzycki and his wife, Kristi, were feeding the waterfowl at City Park in Van Buren, Ark.



Chilly afternoon

Nayeli Holguin, right, pulls the hood of her coat over her face to use as a shield against the cold winds in El Paso, Texas. Nayeli and her mother, Tomsa, were waiting to board a bus.



Bringing holiday home

Six-year-old Nathaniel Syverson and his father, Kent, use a wagon to haul home their family's Christmas tree from a neighborhood tree lot in Eau Claire, Wis. Kent Syverson said the wagon tree transport has become a family tradition.

Lava lamp blast kills 1

WA KENT — A man who placed a lava lamp on a hot stove top was killed when it exploded and sent a shard of glass into his heart, police said.

Philip Quinn, 24, was found dead in his trailer home by his parents. "Why on earth he was heating a lava lamp on the stove, we don't know," Kent Police spokesman Paul Petersen said.

After the lamp exploded, Quinn apparently stumbled into his bedroom, where he died, authorities said.

Police found no evidence of drug or alcohol use.

Drag racing death

VT WESTMINSTER — A Putney man whom police said was drag racing lost control of his car and was killed along with two others in a head-on collision.

Tyler Gilbert, 23, was chasing another car when he crossed the center line and struck a car driven by Laura Sears Davis, 35, of Dummerston, according to police.

Davis and a passenger, Brian Davis, were killed in a race, police said. A 3-year-old girl and 5-year-old girl, whom police described as the Davises' nieces, were also in the car.

Vermont State Police said they suspect alcohol contributed to the crash. Senior Trooper Jonathan Graham is continuing the investigation and awaiting autopsy results.

Studying freshman life

MD ANNAPOLIS — In his first weeks as a freshman at St. John's College, Roger "Rusty" Martin missed two days of crew practice. He feared the coach might cut him from the team, but he had legitimate reasons: CT scans and a checkup with his oncologist.

The 61-year-old was four years removed from a battle with melanoma that nearly killed him. Martin, the president of Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va., is the oldest freshman at St. John's — by four decades.

Martin went back to school this year because he wanted to study the freshman experience in a way that would be impossible from the president's office. So he took a semester-long sabbatical from the top of the academic food chain to dwell at the bottom.

Reasons for foster care

VA RICHMOND — A study shows that thousands of parents have placed their children in Virginia foster care because they want their kids to get mental-health services that would be otherwise unaffordable.

The report commissioned by the General Assembly shows that 2,008 of the 8,702 children in foster care — or nearly one-quarter — appeared "to be in custody to obtain treatment." The study, which used data from the Department of Social Services, is based on children in foster care as of June 1.

The report's recommendations to the General Assembly include increasing funding for the Comprehensive Services Act, which is designed to provide money for mental health services for children, and helping families access private insurance for mental health services.

Five killed in collision

IL MARION — Five people were killed in an accident on Interstate 57 near Marion, state police said. A northbound van from Chicago carrying a family of four crossed the median and struck a vehicle head-on, killing everyone in the van and the driver of the vehicle. The accident closed the interstate for about five hours. A third vehicle that was behind the second one also was hit. The six people in that car were treated for minor injuries at the scene, Minor said.

College alcohol ban

WA SEATTLE — Students at Seattle Pacific University voted overwhelmingly last spring to ease the 113-year-old Christian school's alcohol ban, but administrators still don't plan to do so.

The school bans any consumption by students or faculty, even off campus. Officials say the ban promotes a healthy lifestyle. Many students say the Bible does not prohibit moderate drinking.

Health insurance guide

NY ALBANY — A guide for consumers and physicians to maximize health insurance coverage for the growing problem of obesity is scheduled for release.

"Focus On: Overcoming Obesity" will be available online through the state Attorney General's Office and was based on complaints and concerns from consumers to the office. Many consumers simply give up trying to navigate the forms and restrictions even if their health plan covers obesity treatment from counseling and referrals to gastric bypass surgery, said Attorney General Eliot Spitzer.

The report relates complaints to the Attorney General's Office, without naming the patients. The stories include a woman who faced denial because the health plan changed its lengthy preconditions while she sought care, and another who appealed initial denials that the treatment wasn't medically necessary.

Elephant retirement

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The lone Asian elephant at the San Francisco Zoo was moved to a sanctuary for elephants to be retired after years of abuse and performing animals in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

But the American Zoo and Aquarium Association says it hasn't accredited the refuge for 38-year-old Timberbelle, and may refuse to renew the zoo's accreditation.

Victims reimbursed

MA BOSTON — The Clients' Security Board, a little-known arm of the state Supreme Judicial Court, returned more than \$2.4 million to 99 Massachusetts residents who were victimized by bad lawyers, the CSB reported.

The \$2.4 million awarded this year resulted from 26 lawyers who defrauded clients.

Formed 30 years ago, the seven attorneys on the CSB volunteer their time to reimburse eligible clients who have been defrauded. The 47,500 lawyers practicing in the Bay State contribute \$40 of their yearly \$220 registration fee to fund the CSB.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES



CBS/AP

Former "Jeopardy!" champion Ken Jennings, left, reacts to a right answer while being quizzed by talk show host David Letterman on the "Late Show with David Letterman." Jennings finally lost on Tuesday's broadcast, after becoming the biggest money winner in TV game show history, earning \$2,520,700 over a 74-game run.

So long, Smartypants

Ken Jennings ended his record-shattering 74-show winning streak on "Jeopardy!" during Tuesday's episode. He earned \$2,520,700 — the most money ever won by a TV game show contestant.

Correct answers	Average wager	One-day winnings
2,613 out of 2,848 attempts	\$3,799 on Daily Double	Highest \$75,000*
51 out of 74 in Final Jeopardy	\$7,727 on Final Jeopardy	Lowest \$10,001
		Average \$34,063.51

Losing "Most of this firm's 70,000 seasonal question white-collar employees work only four months a year,"

NOTE: Data is through 74 shows.

Sources: King World Productions Inc.; gameshowson.net



AP

'Jeopardy!' whiz finally meets his match

By DAVID BAUDER
The Associated Press

Jennings loses after 74 games, \$2.5 million

NEW YORK — Following his remarkable run as the "Jeopardy!" whiz, Ken Jennings is famous enough to be trailed by a fan in the subway, is penning a book and, of course, has \$2,520,700 in winnings to decide how to spend.

What he doesn't have anymore, after his 74-game winning streak came to an end in an episode televised Tuesday, is a chance to play his favorite game.

"I miss it quite a bit," Jennings said.

"It didn't really hit me that that was going to be the hard part."

"I thought the hard part would be the loss."

He seemed so invincible that when California real estate agent Nancy Zerg beat him, there was an audible gasp from the audience.

As someone who always has prepared his own tax returns, Jennings was tripped up in Final Jeopardy by this answer: Most of this firm's 70,000 seasonal

white-collar employees work only four months a year.

Zerg had the correct reply: "Someone's got to beat him sometime, it might as well be me."

Hanging out backstage with fellow contestants, she saw some Jennings opponents had essentially lost before the game. She heard one person say that it looked like he was playing for second, and another just wishing not to be humiliated.

"I heard another one say, 'It's no great sin to lose to Ken Jennings,' and they went in and lost to Ken Jennings," she said.

"I thought, 'That's no way to play the game.'"

The loss is actually a distant memory and was not really a secret: The show was taped in early September and news leaked right away.

Video clips of his loss appeared Monday on the Internet.

He combined an extraordinary breadth of knowledge, uncanny

skill at sensing the precise instant to ring his buzzer, and a sharp competitive instinct hidden behind his grin and polite manner.

It made many of the games boring. But "Jeopardy!" executives aren't complaining: ratings were up 22 percent over the same period last season.

Jennings said he'd been thinking about walking away after some future milestone — win, perhaps, or \$3 million or \$4 million in winnings. He said there were about a dozen games where one reply made the difference between winning and losing, and he figured his luck would end soon.

"I'm actually cheering for somebody to beat my record," he said. "How cool would that be? But, realistically, I don't think there's much of a chance ... So many lucky things had to happen."

"Everything had to fall the right way."

Zerg, who found the whole experience of winning "surreal," scoffed at the false modesty.

"It's not because things fell the right way," she said. "It's because he's that good."

The most rewarding part of his experience, Jennings said, is the number of times he's been approached by young children.

"Maybe it's because they're most awed by disposable celebrity," he said. "But I think there are some kids who got the idea that it may be a little cooler to know stuff and to read and to learn. If watching me on TV convinces some kid that they've got some future in knowledge, that would be very rewarding to me."

Meanwhile, Kansas City, Mo.-based H&R Block Inc. capitalized on the chance for a little publicity by offering him free tax and financial services for life, which Jennings accepted.

"If he had to lose, it was nice that he lost to us and we could offer him something," David Byers, senior vice president for tax operations, said Tuesday.

Jennings will probably owe about \$1.04 million in federal and Utah taxes on the winnings, Byers said, citing preliminary calculations by H&R Block.

Godzilla gets a Hollywood star

Godzilla finally received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, 50 years after he stomped onto movie screens and hours before the premiere of his latest film, "Godzilla: Final Wars."

Producer Shogo Tomiyama appeared at a ceremony Monday outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre, where the 2,271-star is located.

"I'm here representing Godzilla. Unfortunately, he cannot speak English," he said. "We're very excited he is being honored in America."

On screen, the fire-breathing sea creature was spawned by nuclear weapons testing. He made his appearance in Japanese theaters in November 1954 — while the United States was conducting nuclear tests



Godzilla

in the South Pacific.

A version starring Raymond Burr made it to theaters in the United States two years later.

Shriver supports amendment

Maris Shriver believes there should be an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow her husband, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, to run for president — but she has her doubts that it will be enacted.

"Forget about it," California's first lady says in an article in the January issue of Vanity Fair magazine, on newstands Wednesday. "It is not going to happen. The process takes years, and this is as far as it goes."

She said there "absolutely" should be an amendment that would allow Republican Schwarzenegger and other naturalized citizens to run for president. "We are a nation of immigrants," she says.

It would take two-thirds votes in Congress and approval by at least 38 states to

adopt such an amendment.

Schwarzenegger, who was born in Austria and became a U.S. citizen in 1983, has said he's interested in running for president.

A Silicon Valley-based group run by a political supporter of the governor has started a Web site and begun running cable television ads promoting an amendment that would allow him to do so.

A Texas radio talk-show host has started raising funds for television ads opposing the change.

'Do They Know ...' again

A new recording of the 1984 charity single "Do They Know It's Christmas?" hit British record stores, many of which opened early in anticipation of large



Shriver

crowds.

The single features artists including Coldplay's Chris Martin, former Beatle Paul McCartney, U2's Bono and Dido. The recording will raise money for victims of the ongoing strife in the Sudan, where fighting has killed thousands of people and created 1.8 million refugees.

HMV Records, one of Britain's largest music retailers, opened more than 200 stores an hour early, at 8 a.m. Monday and reported strong early record sales.

HMV and other retailers were selling the single for \$7.55.

The song retails for \$2.82 at online distributors.

Apple's iTunes, the popular online music store, wasn't carrying the single because it declined to sell the song for more than the service's \$1.50 base price. An Apple spokesman in London declined Monday to comment on its dispute with the Band Aid trust over the cost of the recording.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



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Horoscope

What's not to love about the Leo moon as it imparts its generous and regal energy, lending its passion and regal entertainment? All right, things are sometimes just too sickeningly grand and dramatic to the level of exhaustion, but other than that, what's not to love? Get in touch with your inner royalty. Make a gesture appropriate to the day.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 2). Your dogged determination in previous years will pay off this year! Watch your original ideas bear fruit. Continuing to encourage people around you is key to making the most of improved finances through March. Couples make new rules in the spring. Singles: Be bold enough to make the first move. Lucky signs are Aquarius and Gemini.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You'll be drawn to eccentric types—the sort who wear a hat and fox fur to empty the garbage. These folks have something invaluable to teach you about joyful living and could take you under their wing if you're willing to learn.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're feeling detached, as though what's happening to you isn't happening to someone else and you're merely a witness. There's power in this frame of mind. You can honestly tell yourself what behavior needs changing.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Everyone needs someone else to balance. You're the reasonable one now, so naturally, the unreasonable people are drawn to you. Remind that whining someone: if you work for the butcher, don't complain about the blood.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). In order to give up a struggle you've first got to recognize it as such. Are you flowing with the current, treading water or swimming upstream? A strong female will help you out if you show gratitude.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Sticking up for your rights is one thing, but causing turmoil when the problem is really your own is quite another.

Figure out what's really bothering you. Then, instead of dragging another person into it, you can simply drop it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your circle of pals is feeling verbal, witty and verging on rude! There are so many zingers being shot around that you'll feel like you're at a Fiaris Club roast! Be careful not to let the fun get out of hand.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're a fanatic practitioner of fair play, feeling that if you don't make a gesture correctly, there could potentially be a problem.

To avoid resistance to your ideas, give credit wherever possible.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Sometimes, for the sake of making a relationship better, you must forget your quest to make a relationship better for a few days. A relationship is a living thing and requires breathing room and time on its own to grow.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There's practically no end to your optimism. Life may not be how you are seeing it, but isn't that the point? Ultimately, your sunny attitude will reduce stress and keep you focused on what's important.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You instinctively know how to use the element of surprise. You've stashed tricks up your sleeve you haven't even used yet! In fact, you're the sign most likely to jump out of a birthday cake — metaphorically speaking, of course.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The constant assembling and reassembling of data gets overwhelming. You'll start to feel that the world is random and not connected — but then, you're over that in five minutes, and it's back to your usual hopefulness.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Get a conversation going between family members. You don't need to come up with the right answer today, but it's helpful to take the talk time up on a tip-toe. The more thought provoking your questions, the better.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



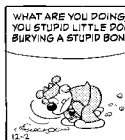
Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



Better or Worse



Peanuts



SCOREBOARD

AFN™ & Radio

Thursday

AFN-Atlantic, 1 a.m.—NBA: Toronto at Orlando.
WFOE Sports, 4 a.m.—College basketball: Wake Forest at Illinois.
WFOE Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: North Carolina at Indiana.
WFOE Sports, noon—College basketball: Ohio St. at Clemson (4-1).
WFOE Sports, noon—College basketball: Virginia at Northwestern (2-1).
WFOE Sports, 3 p.m.—College basketball: North Carolina at Indiana (4-1).
WFOE Sports, 6 p.m.—College basketball: Utah at Seattle (4-1).

Friday

AFN-Atlantic, 1:30 a.m.—College football: Michigan at Wake Forest. Championship game. Toledo vs. Miami (Ohio).
WFOE Sports, 4:30 a.m.—NBA: Cleveland at Dallas.
WFOE Sports, 215 a.m.—NBA: Cleveland at Dallas.
AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.—College basketball: Detroit Mercy at Tennessee (2-1).
AFN-Sports, noon—College basketball: Wake Forest at Alabama-Birmingham (2-1).
AFN-Sports, 3 p.m.—College football: Miami at Cincinnati. Championship game. Toledo vs. Miami (Ohio) (4-1).

All times Central European Time. Not indicated broadcasts not scheduled. All times subject to change. Some radio broadcasts not available in all areas. Visit www.afn.net for more information.

Pro football

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	10	0	0	0	.000	125	158
N.Y. Jets	8	3	0	0	.727	225	188
Indianapolis	7	2	0	0	.714	225	182
San Diego	7	0	0	0	.714	225	182
Denver	6	1	0	0	.667	225	182
Miami	5	0	0	0	.500	182	225
Atlanta	4	0	0	0	.400	182	225
Indianapolis	3	0	0	0	.300	182	225
San Diego	2	0	0	0	.200	182	225
Denver	1	0	0	0	.100	182	225
Tennessee	0	0	0	0	.000	182	225

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Thursday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

Sunday's games

NATIONAL CONFERENCE		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Diego	8	0	0	0	.000	225	182
Atlanta	7	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	6	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	5	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	4	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	3	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	2	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	1	0	0	0	.000	225	182
San Francisco	0	0	0	0	.000	225	182

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25

TUESDAY		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
1.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
2.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
3.	Syracuse (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
4.	Georgia Tech (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
5.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
6.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
7.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
8.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
9.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
10.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
11.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
12.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
13.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
14.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
15.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
16.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
17.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
18.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
19.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
20.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182

TUESDAY		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
1.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
2.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
3.	Syracuse (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
4.	Georgia Tech (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
5.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
6.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
7.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
8.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
9.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
10.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
11.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
12.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
13.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
14.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
15.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
16.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
17.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
18.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
19.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
20.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182

TUESDAY		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
1.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
2.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
3.	Syracuse (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
4.	Georgia Tech (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
5.	North Carolina (4-1)	4	0	0	.000	225	182
6.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
7.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
8.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
9.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
10.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
11.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
12.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
13.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
14.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
15.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
16.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
17.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
18.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
19.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182
20.	Wake Forest (5-0)	5	0	0	.000	225	182

Framingham St. 66, Roger Williams 57
 Greenville St. 77, Pitt-Johnstown 66
 Grove City 78, La Roche 68
 La Salle 71, Southern Cal 62
 Albany
 Mass.-Dartmouth 62, Bridgewater, Mass.
 59
 Muhlenberg 74, Moravian 61
 N.Y. 80, Washington, Md. 45
 New Paltz 72, NYU 61
 Oswego St. 76, Genesee St. 54
 Potsdam 64, Clarkson 45
 Rider 78, Monmouth, N.J. 61
 Salve Reg. 66, St. John's, Mass. 75
 Skidmore 64, Hartwick 45
 Springfield 90, Curry 76
 St. John's 66, Stony Brook 57
 St. Joseph's, NY 72, Briarcliffe 48
 St. Vincent 70, St. John's 78
 Telkwa-Pont 73, Dominican, N.Y. 72

Chiefs' Vermeil says he'll be on sideline in 2005

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The coach who made burnout a part of sports lexicon is back and enduring one of the most disappointing years of a long, distinguished career.

NFL briefs

But there are no thoughts of another retirement for Dick Vermeil, who said Tuesday he'll be back next season for the final year of his contract with the Kansas City Chiefs.

"Sometimes I walk off the field feeling sorry for myself," Vermeil said Tuesday. "That's human nature. I'd be a liar not to say that. Everything we do that fails I feel just as bad about today as I did in the late '70s and early '80s. But I handle it better."

Expected to be a Super Bowl contender after posting a 13-3 regular-season record last season, the Chiefs are 3-8 and on a four-game losing skid. There are no playoff games looming, only big changes on the field and possibly in the front office.

Vermeil, who walked away from the Philadelphia Eagles in 1982 citing emotional exhaustion and burnout, said he's determined to be back.

"I would certainly hope (so)," said Chiefs General Manager Carl Peterson, a friend from the Philadelphia days who coached Vermeil out of his second retirement in 2001, after he led the St. Louis Rams to victory in a Super Bowl.

"He's got a two-year contract. I would be very surprised if that changed for any reason. He's a very resilient guy. He's determined. I think he's anxious to try to get this thing going in the right direction. Dick is disappointed. We all are. He's looking for solutions. He's getting through it."

Peterson usually speaks with Vermeil several times a day and always keeps a close eye on the attitude of the players and staff.

"Dick has done a magnificent job of keeping the players focused and enthusiastic about what they're doing," he said. "We know they get paid for it, but you still have to have a passion for it."

For the third year in a row, a faulty defense has ruined an outstanding year from one of the NFL's top offenses. There is mounting criticism not only of the coaching staff, but of the player personnel and scouting departments.

QB Hutchinson to start for Bears

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chad Hutchinson was about to go surfing near his Southern California home two months ago when he got a call from the Chicago Bears.

They weren't promising anything, only a roster

NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognoses. (See Friday's edition for complete injury report provided by the league.)

Dolphins: LB Zach Thomas (hamstring) will not play Sunday.
Packers: TE David Martin (strained knee) out for season.

spot and the possibility of playing for a team that goes through quarterbacks like practice jerseys. But for a guy who went from being the next Troy Aikman to a pre-training camp castoff, it was more than enough.

"It's awesome. This is all I can ask for," he said. "Two months ago I was like, 'Man, I just want to get back in the game to just get an opportunity,' and my opportunity is here. For me, I'm just so excited because this is what I love to do and it's another opportunity to do it."

Hutchinson will start against the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday, the Bears' fourth quarterback this season.

"Last time I put so much pressure on myself to be the next Troy Aikman when it wasn't really feasible," he said. "This time I'm going to do the little things that will help me get better as a quarterback in the NFL. I'm going to have fun because this is another house on fire."

Hutchinson showed great promise in two seasons at Stanford, throwing for 4,235 yards and 20 touchdowns with a completion rate of 60 percent. But as good a football player as he was, he was just as good — or better — as a pitcher. The right-hander was 10-5 with a 4.89 ERA and 115 strikeouts his junior season, and the St. Louis Cardinals took him in the second round of the 1998 amateur draft.

He spent most of the next four years in the minor leagues, making a brief appearance in the majors in April 2001. After compiling a 24.75 ERA in three appearances, Hutchinson went back to the minors and realized he still wanted to play football.

Bucs release veteran PK Gramatica

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers released struggling kicker Martin Gramatica on Tuesday and replaced him with Arena Football League kicker Jay Taylor.

The team's career scoring leader missed three field goals in Sunday's 21-14 loss at Carolina and was 1-for-19 this season. He missed seven of his last nine attempts and had not made a field goal over 22 yards since Oct. 10.

Redskins' Taylor pleads not guilty to drunken driving charge

FAIRFAX, Va. — Washington Redskins safety Sean Taylor pleaded not guilty Wednesday to a drunken driving charge, and his trial was rescheduled for Jan. 5.

The rookie players to call teammates as witnesses to say he was sober Oct. 27, said Taylor's lawyer, Warren McLain. Taylor had been at a birthday party for wide receiver Rod Gardner.

Taylor, the No. 5 overall draft pick, was pulled over by a Virginia state trooper on Washington's beltway and received a breath test. Virginia state police say he failed field sobriety tests.

McLain contends Taylor passed the tests.

Parcells turns to Testaverde again

By CLARENCE E. HILL JR.
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

IRVING, Texas — In choosing to return 18-year veteran quarterback Vinny Testaverde to the starting lineup for Monday's game at Seattle, Cowboys coach Bill Parcells is not necessarily casting a vote against the development of rookie Drew Henson.

Rather his choice is a vote — now more than ever — against giving up on the present.

Despite their disappointing 4-7 record, the Cowboys are one game back in the race for the final playoff spot in the NFC.

The Cowboys could move a step closer with a victory against Seattle. Parcells said Testaverde simply gives them the best chance to take that step.

"I am rooting for Henson," he said. "He just needs more experience. You say, 'how's he gonna get that?' I can't forsake everything to do that. I couldn't do it in good conscience. It's just not right. My mind only works basically this week, this season; that is what my responsibility is — to try to get the most out of this team, this year."

Parcells couldn't deny the Cowboys suddenly have something legitimate to play for — maybe even more by Monday. With a 7-4 mark, the Minnesota Vikings are the front-runners for one of the two NFC wild-card spots. The St. Louis Rams (5-6) and New York Giants (5-6) are one game ahead of seven 4-7 teams — the Chicago Bears, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Arizona Cardinals, Detroit Lions, Carolina Panthers, New Orleans Saints and the Cowboys — for the other spot.

On Sunday, the Bears play the Vikings, the Buccaneers meet the Panthers and the Lions battle the Cardinals. So the Cowboys might find themselves in a better position before they kick off Monday night.

"I'm not the one that mentioned playoffs, but I am just saying things are a lot different now than they were last week," Parcells said.

Parcells also dispatched any notion that his quarterback decision was against the wishes of owner Jerry Jones, who expressed "surprise" and "disappointment" following the 21-7 Thanksgiving Day victory against the Bears, because Henson was replaced by Testaverde midway through his first NFL start.

Jones said it was nice to get the win, but it would have been sweeter with Henson at the helm.

Parcells said he didn't give Jones' comments as criticism or second guessing, but rather him expressing his opinion.

Parcells said any characterizations of the two being on opposite ends of this issue are wrong.

"I'm telling you we're not on opposite ends so you write what you want, or say what you want; it isn't going to have any bearing on my response," Parcells said.

Parcells certainly has no regrets about his decision against the Bears. Henson struggled in the first half against a blitzing defense. He completed four of 12 passes for 31 yards, including an interception returned 45 yards for a touchdown.

With the score 7-7 at halftime, Parcells made the change. Testaverde, who did not start because of a shoulder injury suffered a week earlier against Baltimore, completed nine of 14 passes for 92 yards. He gave the Cowboys a 17-7 lead in the fourth quarter with a 5-yard touchdown pass to fullback Brian Barman.

"I knew that bringing (Testaverde) into the game that Chicago could not do what they were trying to do to Drew," Parcells said. "If they did, they'd have been burned pretty bad. As soon as Vinny came in there, they changed quite a bit themselves. But they were all-out committed to pressuring Drew into bad plays. Once Vinny got in there, they got a little bit more conservative themselves. I don't know what would have happened. I just think they would have been more adamant about pressing."

NFL Hall of Fame Challenge

Top Scores for Week 12

254	yankees#1
252	Blitz
252	Quick Pick
246	PAC ATTACK
246	travieso
246	Big Mama
244	NobleMac357
244	Nanook
244	Steel Thunder
244	Tidbit

Spangdahlem	2000
DeDios	1998
282nd BSB	1990
35 MXS	1984
528th. SOSB (A)	1978
JAC/RAF Molesworth	1970
Leighton Barracks	1970
Yokota AB	1970
Schell AB	1970
Stuttgart Military Comm.	1970

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Best Overall Scores

STEEFGROWOOD	MAG-12
glad#1	hbc 2/37 av
archy	European Stars & Stripes
SLIPMEISTER 04	Hohenfels
Jack58	422 AB RAF Croughton
me	Darmstadt
Jaguar One	DoDDs
bam	20 REPLACEMENT
dogboy	374 AMKS
DREW	DoDDs

See websites for official game rules.

Check this space every Thursday during the entire NFL season for the weeks Top Scores and Best Overall Scores during the NFL Challenge.



San Diego Chargers tight end Antonio Gates (85) scores one of his two touchdowns against Kansas City on Sunday. Gates is second in the league in receptions and has scored 11 touchdowns.

Gates has created new hoopla

Basketball player turning heads as NFL TE

By BERNIE WILSON

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The closest Antonio Gates gets to basketball these days is on his PlayStation. He's still somewhat of a curiosity, for sure, the former power forward who helped take Kent State within a game of the 2002 Final Four.

On Sunday, he caught two more touchdown passes from Drew Brees to help the Chargers beat Kansas City 34-31 and improve to 8-3 atop the AFC West. Gates had a better game than Tony Gonzalez, Kansas City's five-time Pro Bowl tight end and a former college hoops star himself, who had a better game than Gates.

Gates has caught 11 of Brees' 21 touchdown passes and needs one more to tie the NFL record for tight ends, which is shared by four players. He's already broken Hall of Famer Kellen Winslow's team record for touchdowns in a season by a tight end, 10 in 1981. "For me, I am being the kind of guy that I just, to hear all these special things — it's kind of like mind-boggling," said Gates, who didn't play football in college. "I play to have fun regardless of the records and the comparisons. I'm trying to build an identity for Antonio Gates."

On one hand, that's not a problem. As every Sunday passes, though, his hoops career grows more distant. Gates continues to emerge as one of the NFL's top playmakers, a seemingly unstoppable tight end who's helping power the surprising San Diego Chargers toward a long-sought playoff berth. On Sunday, he caught two more touchdown passes from Drew Brees to help the Chargers beat Kansas City 34-31 and improve to 8-3 atop the AFC West. "We've put him out there on corners and he's beat them on fades, beat them on slants, beat them on whatever we need to beat them on. He can do that. He's that kind of athlete."

"You see what the guy's doing; I see him having a long and prosperous career in this league," Brees said. "When people see him make the Pro Bowl this year, if he hasn't turned a lot of heads already, he will then."

Gates continues to baffle defenses and make fans forget "Marty Ball," the plodding, run-oriented offense once favored by coach Marty Schottenheimer. At times, offensive coordinator Cam Cameron has had Gates line up as a wide receiver and in the backfield.

Gates is second in the NFL with 69 catches (over 795 yards), one behind Tennessee's Derrick Mason. He's scored the same number of touchdowns as teammate LaDainian Tomlinson. Only three players have scored more TDs: Priest Holmes, Terrell Owens and Shaun Alexander.

The Chargers used to be brutal on third down, which is now when the 6-foot-4, 260-pound Gates makes some of his biggest plays. He leads the NFL with 24 third-down catches, including five for touchdowns.

"He's up there because of the matchups he creates," Brees said. "We've put him out there on corners and he's beat them on fades, beat them on slants, beat them on whatever we need to beat them on. He can do that. He's that kind of athlete."

Gates remains humble about his success and isn't ready to put himself in the company of players such as Owens and Gonzalez. "I've got to have fun regardless of the records and the comparisons. I'm trying to build an identity for Antonio Gates."

On one hand, that's not a problem. As every Sunday passes, though, his hoops career grows more distant. Gates continues to emerge as one of the NFL's top playmakers, a seemingly unstoppable tight end who's helping power the surprising San Diego Chargers toward a long-sought playoff berth.

want to feel part of something and I think right now I'm part of something special, this offense." Gates, who joined the Chargers as an undrafted rookie in May 2003, is still learning.

Schottenheimer talked to him last week about running better after making a catch. Then Gates took off for a 51-yard gain on a fourth-quarter pass play on Sunday, only to have it come back when the Chargers were whistled for an illegal formation.

"But I did make sure that I alerted him he did a terrific job in that regard," Schottenheimer said. "As for Gates' development, 'It would be less than fair to him to say that it's become very, very obvious that I play pickup games with him.'"

"You look at the fact that he's kind of swept on the scene. I think it's because very, very obvious that while people mention the basketball, he's certainly establishing his performance level to the point that really, that's what he is, a terrific National Football League receiver. And I didn't say 'tight end.' I said 'receiver.'"

Gates still watches hoops on TV but doesn't play pickup games anymore in order to stay focused on football. He knows people will always associate him with his hoops career. "When I played basketball, they always looked at me as a football player. When I was hitting 34, they were like, 'This is a football player.' When I was scoring two, three touchdowns, it was like, 'This is a basketball player we're talking about.'"

Gates has fun with the comparisons, especially with him and the Chargers are doing so well. "I can't tell you to step back and shoot the three, I can do that," he said.

NFL statistics

AFC individual leaders

Week 12 Quarterbacks

Player	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Manning, Ind.	352	237	3,196	41	5
Brees, S.D.	313	206	2,458	21	3
Reed/Brees, N.Y.	232	121	1,719	12	1
Pennington, N.J.	216	144	1,643	9	3
Green, K.C.	372	240	2,652	15	5
Plummer, Den.	317	204	2,751	22	11
Brady, N.E.	298	195	2,454	5	5
Carr, Hou.	347	216	2,752	12	9
Lynch, Minn.	307	199	2,185	10	5
Volek, Ten.	171	104	1,013	6	5

Rushers

Player	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Dillon, Minn.	243	1,192	4.9	40	6
Barber, N.Y.	259	1,171	4.5	28	9
James, C.D.	236	1,121	4.8	44	4
A. Johnson, C.F.	248	1,040	4.2	52	1
Droughens, Den.	202	945	4.7	51	3
Johnson, Hou.	186	945	5.1	42	1
Tomlinson, S.D.	237	899	3.8	42	11
Holmes, K.C.	186	892	4.8	40	1
Brown, Ten.	186	872	4.7	52	5
McGhee, Buf.	190	758	4.0	41	2

Receivers

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Mason, Ten.	69	795	11.5	29	11
C. Johnson, C.D.	65	810	14.0	33	4
Gonzalez, K.C.	64	838	13.1	32	5
Moulis, Buf.	72	724	10.1	49	4
Harrison, Ind.	63	764	12.1	52	11
Johnson, Hou.	61	863	14.2	54	5
Ward, Pitt.	60	720	12.0	58	3
J. Smith, Jac.	57	609	10.7	41	5
Mortimer, K.C.	52	747	14.0	52	2

Punters

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Lechler, Oak.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Sauerbrunn, Minn.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Hendrich, Ten.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Moorman, Minn.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Hanson, Jac.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Larson, C.D.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Gardocki, Pitt.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
S. Miller, N.E.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Scifres, S.D.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Stanley, Hou.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2

Punt Returns

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Clements, Buf.	10	259	25.9	68	1
Hall, K.C.	10	118	11.8	46	0
Smith, Den.	15	166	11.1	30	0
Sams, Bal.	1	666	66.6	91	1
Lewis, Jac.	27	227	9.9	50	0
Johnson, Hou.	17	173	10.2	27	0
Wardell, S.D.-Mia.	23	252	9.3	25	0
Wardell, S.D.	23	252	9.3	25	0
Parker, S.D.	21	183	8.7	32	0

Kickoff Returns

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
McBee, Buf.	41	1,030	25.1	87	1
Davitt, S.D.	21	527	25.1	41	0
Hall, K.C.	41	1,030	25.1	87	1
Alston, Cle.	26	667	25.6	87	1
J. Johnson, N.E.	15	375	25.0	45	0
T. Edwards, Jac.	15	375	25.0	45	0
Wright, Minn.	17	428	25.2	45	0
Coleough, Pitt.	17	428	25.2	45	0
Rhodes, Ind.	17	428	25.2	45	0

Scoring Touchdowns

Player	TD	Rec	Ret	Pts
Holmes, K.C.	15	11	0	66
Bettis, Pitt.	11	0	11	66
Gates, S.D.	11	0	11	66
Tomlinson, S.D.	11	11	0	66
Martin, N.Y.	11	11	0	66
Davis, Hou.	9	8	1	54
Wayne, Ind.	8	8	0	48
Stokely, Ind.	8	8	0	48
Dillon, N.E.	8	8	0	48

Kicking

Player	Yds	FG	Pct	LG	TD
Vinateri, N.E.	28	28	100	48	12
St. Louis	25	25	100	48	12
Elam, Den.	29	29	100	48	12
Kearney, S.D.	28	28	100	48	12
Dawson, Minn.	28	28	100	48	12
Reed, Pitt.	29	29	100	48	12
Moorman, Minn.	29	29	100	48	12
K. Brown, Hou.	23	23	100	48	12
Boyer, Bal.	24	24	100	48	12
Brien, N.Y.	24	24	100	48	12
Vanderjaght, Ind.	45	45	100	48	12

Team statistics

AVERAGE PER GAME OFFENSE

Team	Yds	TD	Pass	Run
Indianapolis	413	12	269	144
Kansas City	412	15	261	151
San Diego	364	18	226	138
Dallas	350	12	222	128
Houston	340	10	218	122
New Orleans	331	11	215	116
Jacksonville	331	11	215	116
San Francisco	328	11	215	113
Oakland	317	7	214	103
Atlanta	316	11	215	101
Cincinnati	308	11	195	113
Cleveland	280	10	170	110
Buffalo	280	10	170	110
Miami	265	8	161	104
Denver	248	11	153	135

DEFENSE

Team	Yds	TD	Pass	Run
Pittsburgh	244	7	168	76
San Diego	237	12	155	82
Baltimore	208	10	137	71
Miami	206	10	137	69
New York Jets	206	10	137	69
Denver	204	9	136	68
New England	203	9	136	67
Tennessee	203	9	136	67
San Francisco	203	9	136	67
Jacksonville	202	9	136	66
Seattle	202	9	136	66
Cincinnati	202	9	136	66
San Diego	202	9	136	66
Houston	202	9	136	66
Kansas City	202	9	136	66
Indianapolis	202	9	136	66

NFC individual leaders

Week 12 Quarterbacks

Player	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Culpepper, Min.	380	240	3,180	28	7
McNabb, Phil.	350	224	2,882	22	5
Brees, S.D.	303	194	2,481	22	11
Favre, G.B.	331	204	2,602	22	11
Valdes-Solis, A.C.	317	204	2,602	22	11
Warner, N.Y.G.	268	168	1,927	6	4
Vick, Atl.	299	168	1,927	6	4
Harrison, Den.	317	181	1,921	14	6
Rattay, S.F.	304	168	2,160	10	9
Deshaun, Minn.	269	168	2,025	19	13

Rushers

Player	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Alexander, Sea.	227	1,150	5.0	44	2
Barber, N.Y.	259	1,171	4.5	28	9
Portis, Was.	244	945	3.9	60	10
Allen, S.F.	199	845	4.2	52	1
Vick, Atl.	181	909	7.2	58	3
F. Smith, S.F.	181	845	4.7	52	1
Smith, Ariz.	184	679	3.7	29	8
Westbrook, Phil.	148	653	4.4	40	1
Dunn, Atl.	158	642	4.1	54	7
T. Jones, Chi.	148	616	4.1	50	5

Receivers

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Horn, N.O.	69	840	12.2	57	6
Bruce, S.F.	67	1,026	15.3	56	4
E. Johnson, S.F.	65	684	10.5	50	5
Owens, Phil.	61	869	15.9	59	13
Driver, G.B.	61	804	13.2	50	5
Walker, G.B.	60	960	16.0	79	1
Clayton, Minn.	58	845	14.6	41	3
Hoff, S.F.	58	775	13.4	52	6
Witten, Den.	58	775	13.4	52	6
Coles, Was.	58	661	11.4	45	5

Punters

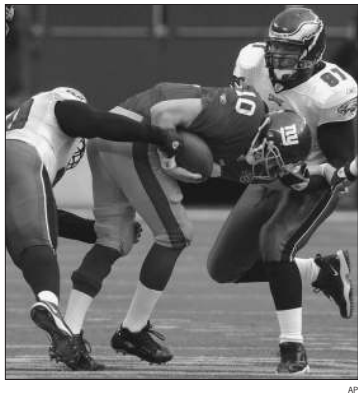
Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Lechler, Oak.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Sauerbrunn, Minn.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Berger, N.O.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Moorman, Minn.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Lundetta, S.F.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Johnson, Phil.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Maynard, Atl.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Clayton, Minn.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Feagles, N.Y.G.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Player, Ariz.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2
Harris, Den.	49	2,047	41.8	64	2

Punt Returns

Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Drummond, Den.	12	273	22.8	75	1
Ross, Atl.	27	335	12.4	75	1
Johnson, S.F.	16	176	11.0	91	1
Burleson, Minn.	16	176	11.0	91	1
Thresh, Was.	15	141	9.4	43	0
Clayton, Minn.	14	141	10.1	43	0
Ward, Atl.	14	141	10.1	43	0
Chatham, Den.	22	169	7.7	20	0
Williams, Ariz.	28	153	5.5	20	0

Kickoff Returns

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Drummond, Det.	41	1092	26.6	99	2
Allen, Atl.	1	652	65.2	99	0
Allen, NY-G	21	552	26.3	99	3
Allen, T.B.	26	675	26.0	99	5
Allen, Phil.	21	527	25.1	99	6
Allen, Chi.	15	356	23.7	44	0
Allen, Dal.	31	718	23.2	66	6
Allen, N.O.	46	1052	22.9	55	5
Allen, Ariz.	23	526	22.9	73	7
Allen, Sea.	22	503	22.9	99	0



Eagles defensive tackles Corey Simon, left, and Darwin Walker, right, converge on Giants quarterback Eli Manning for a sack on Sunday. Philadelphia has given up the fewest points in the league this season.

Yardstick is no way to measure Eagles' D

BY ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The only numbers that matter to the Philadelphia Eagles' defense are the ones on the scoreboard.

Maligned for giving up too many yards, especially on the ground, and overshadowed by a high-powered offense, the Eagles' defense is the stingiest in the NFL. No team has allowed fewer points (164) than Philadelphia, which already clinched its fourth consecutive NFC East title after a 10-1 start.

Overall, the Eagles' defense is ranked 15th in the league, giving up an average of 326.4 yards per game. They've allowed 221.5 yards passing and 120.7 yards rushing per game. Still, they've given up just 14.9 points per game and are the only team to secure a playoff berth.

"We're trying to come together," defensive coordinator Jim Johnson said. "We had some guys hurt early in the year and we haven't had everybody on the field. I think we're improving. We're getting there."

The Eagles haven't given up a touchdown in the past nine quarters, outscoring their opponents 62-12 in that span. It had been 14 years since they went consecutive games without giving up a TD.

Despite the defense's success, it still is considered the team's weakness. Led by Donovan McNabb and Terrell Owens, the Eagles average of 26.6 points per game and the offense receives most of the credit for the team's impressive record. Meanwhile, the defense has been vulnerable against the run at times, making it an easy target for criticism.

But after giving up 252 yards rushing in a 27-3 loss to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia has allowed 283 yards in the last three games, an average of 94.3. One reason for the improvement is the addition of middle linebacker Jeremiah Trotter to the starting lineup, with Mark Simoneau moving from the middle to the weak side.

Trotter has been a physical presence against the run.

"The linebacking crew has done a good job," coach Andy Reid said. "You see (safety) Michael Lewis up there in that support position a little bit more and he's doing a nice job. I'm not going to point at one guy. I think collectively that group has done better. It starts with those defensive linemen, particularly our interior guys. They really challenged themselves the last couple weeks to step up and play and they've done a good job with us."

Though the defense doesn't get as much attention as the offense, a few players are having solid seasons. Defensive end Jevon Kearse has been a disruptive force, getting 7½ sacks and causing nightmares when he lines up in a linebacker position. Backup defensive tackles Sam Rayburn (5½ sacks) and Hollis Thomas have solidified the line, putting pressure on starters Corey Simon and Darwin Walker to play better.

Lewis and free safety Brian Dawkins are an intimidating tandem, while cornerbacks Sheldon Brown and Lito Sheppard have made departed veterans Troy Vincent and Bobby Taylor forgotten names.

"We rode the offense's backs the first half of the year until we got our act together," linebacker Ike Reese said.

Packers backup Davenport ready to shift into forward

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Imagine what Najeh Davenport could have done on two healthy hamstrings.

Davenport, who plowed through the St. Louis Rams for 178 yards in his first NFL start Monday night, can just see it: 200 yards easily, maybe 300.

"Yeah," Davenport said, narrowing his eyes into a you'd-better-believe-it stare. "I can run. I'm a fast dude. I'm like 80 percent. I've got two bad hamstrings, and I was having trouble with my ribs."

After watching Davenport's dominance in Green Bay's 45-17 win Monday night, quarterback Brett Favre isn't about to doubt Davenport's hunch.

"If he was just 80-85 percent, that's scary," Favre said. "He's a fast dude. He was pretty darn good."

Davenport, filling in for injured starter Ahman Green, never turned it loose, not even on his game-clinching 40-yard touchdown run, because he didn't want to risk re-injuring his hamstrings, and Favre isn't about to doubt Davenport's hunch.

"I just kept it in third or fourth gear," he said. Davenport still piled up the fifth-highest rushing total in franchise history while on cruise control. For his breakout performance, Davenport gets ... to be the backup again. Sherman expects Green to return to the starting lineup at Philadelphia next week.

Nonetheless, Davenport had his day to shine. So, just how did Davenport, who was coveted by the Miami Dolphins when Ricky Williams retired, gain so many yards on so few carries with so little burst and so much trepidation?

"I'm faster than a lot of guys anticipate," said Davenport, a 250-pounder who sports tailback speed and a fullback's frame. "I wanted to turn it on. A couple of



Packers backup running back Najeh Davenport says he ran for 178 yards in his first start against the Rams on sore hamstrings.

times I could have run away, but I wanted to play longer. I didn't want to pull it and have a setback."

He's had enough of those for one season. Davenport felt his right hamstring grab in the season opener, went to the sideline, put a rubber sleeve on his leg and returned to action only to feel the muscle rip, sending a searing jolt through his body.

He missed the next month — coinciding with Green Bay's four-game losing streak — before returning in Week 6 at Detroit, where he ran 10 times for 62 yards and a touchdown as the Packers began a six-game winning streak.

Davenport felt his left hamstring grab on him against Minnesota two weeks ago and immediately left the game, unwilling to risk another four-week layoff.

It hurt at practice when he tried to test it, so he sat out against Houston last week, when Green bruised his ribs on his first carry.

With Green still ailing, Davenport was pressed into duty despite being less than 100 percent. "When you lose a back like Ahman, who is a difference-maker, you need someone to step up, and Najeh did," coach Mike Sherman said. "I think he was sandbagging me a little bit on his hamstring. I didn't see a problem with his burst."

Davenport started slowly, running for no gain and 1 yard on his first two carries, both on two-sweeps, before he bulled straight ahead for 15 yards.

"I don't particularly care for those tosses, I'm more of a downhill dude," Davenport said.

A fast dude, a downhill dude. The Packers are just glad he's their dude.

Walters' return adds to Colts arsenal

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Troy Walters was coming off the best season of his NFL career and was finally comfortable in the Indianapolis Colts offense.

Walters had big plans this year. He wanted to prove he was a legitimate No. 3 receiver, that he could excel in one of the NFL's most potent offenses and had earned the confidence of quarterback Peyton Manning.

The Colts know what they have in Walters, a smallish, left receiver at 5-foot-7, 172 pounds.

Two years ago, he was their top

punt returner because of his quick moves. Last year, Walters emerged as a stronger option in the passing game, finishing with 36 receptions for 456 yards and three touchdowns — all career bests.

Walters expected to improve those numbers this season, but his plans changed in the Colts' second preseason game when he was hit by New York Jets safety Jon McGraw.

The Colts said Walters would miss three months, but instead of placing him on injured reserve, a move that would have ended his season — the Colts gambled he could return and kept the roster spot open.

Now, as the Colts begin their home stretch, Walters is ready to play and his teammates are eager to see what he can do.

"He adds another dimension," wide receiver Brandon Stokley said. "It gives us more depth, and you know, you can never have too many options in this league."

The biggest challenge will be integrating Walters into a lineup that has thrived without him. Brandon Stokley has solidified his hold as the Colts third receiver by producing career highs with 47 catches, 729 yards and eight touchdowns.

Walters' return could make the Colts even more dangerous.

He already certainly will get a chance to return punts Sunday against Tennessee, and he'll add another element to an already deep receiving corps. "He's chomping at the bit," coach Tony Dungy said. "He was lobbying hard last week, and this week he should be ready to go."

No. 10 Duke's backcourt handles Michigan State

Ewing, Redick split workload vs. Spartans

The Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — J.J. Redick handled the scoring for Duke in the first half against Michigan State. Daniel Ewing took over in the second half and the Blue Devils held on to remain perfect in the ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

Both guards had 29 points and both made five three-pointers as No. 10 Duke beat the 11th-ranked Spartans 81-74 on Tuesday night.

Redick had 21 points in the first half, and Ewing had 15 in the second as the Blue Devils (4-0) improved to 6-0 in the made-for-TV conference matchup and beat Michigan State (3-1) for the second straight season.

"I was definitely in the zone in the first half," Redick said. "I was really in the flow of the offense. It felt good, that was the first time it's been that way this year."

Ewing's last three came in the final minute, when he hit one with the shot clock winding down to give Duke a 78-73 lead. Michigan State's Paul Davis missed two free throws with 15 seconds left, part of a 3-for-8 effort from the line down the stretch for the Spartans.

"We know we're a good team," Ewing said. "We just did what we had to do."

Davis led the Spartans with 17 points and 10 rebounds.

"We just wanted to try to come down here and try to win," Davis said. "We weren't worried about last year. Everybody played their hearts out."

Duke beat Michigan State 72-50 last season.

In a 3-minute span late in the second half Tuesday, Ewing made a three, drove down the lane for a pull-up jumper and added a layup.

"There were a lot of good players out on that court, but he was the most mature player out there," Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said of Ewing. "He had the look of a champion out on the court. J.J. was great, don't get me wrong, but Daniel was handling it and he was absolutely great."

No. 4 Georgia Tech 99, Michigan 68: B.J. Elder scored 27 points, Will Bynum had 19, and Jarrett Jack added 16 for the Yellow Jackets (4-0), who shot 54 percent from the field and led by as many as 25 points.

Courtney Sims had 17 points for visiting Michigan (3-3), which had 18 turnovers and shot just 41



Duke guard Daniel Ewing, left, moves around Michigan State's Maurice Ager Tuesday in Durham, N.C. Ewing and backcourt mate J.J. Redick each scored 29 points for the Blue Devils in their 81-74 victory.

percent in losing its third straight.

No. 7 Connecticut 59, Fla. International 48: Rashad Anderson scored 17 points and the Huskies (2-0) blocked a school-record 19 shots in posting the home win.

Hilton Armstrong had a career-high five blocks, and Josh Boone had four blocks and 11 rebounds for Connecticut, which finished with a 57-36 advantage on the boards.

Ivan Almonte and Ishmael N'Diaye each had 12 points for the Golden Panthers (3-2).

No. 8 Kentucky 92, Tennessee Tech 63: Kelema Anderson scored 21 points and Chuck Hayes overcame foul trouble to add 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Wildcats (4-0).

Willie Jenkins had 18 points for the visiting Golden Eagles (1-3).

No. 25 Wisconsin 69, NC 12 Maryland 64: Alando Tucker scored a career-high 27 points and the Badgers (3-1) won their 31st consecutive home game, tying Stephen F. Austin for the longest current Division I home winning streak.

Zach Morley scored all 12 of his points over the final 7-40 for Wisconsin, including three free throws in the final 16 seconds of the ACC-Big Ten Challenge matchup.

Ekene Ibekwe scored 21 points to lead Maryland (3-1), which

trailed 64-57 with a minute to play and pulled within 66-64 on a three-pointer by Nik Caner-Medley with 21 seconds remaining.

No. 19 Florida 88, Florida A&M 51: Mohamed Abukar scored a career-high 22 points to lead the Gators (4-0). The sophomore was 8-for-10 from the field, including a 4-for-6 from three-point range.

Jonathan Kelly and Michael Harper each had 10 points for the Rattlers (0-4), who have lost their opening four road games by a combined 122 points.

No. 21 Arizona 98, Wyoming 70: Salim Stoudamire and freshman Jawaan McClellan each scored 19 points and the Wildcats (4-2) pulled away in the second half.

McClellan was 5-for-10 from the field, including 2-for-4 on three-pointers, and was 7-for-8 from the foul line. Stoudamire was 3-for-4 on three.

Jay Stratford scored 19 points for the Cowboys (3-1), who were playing their first road game of the season.

No. 23 Iowa 91, Drake 75: Jeff Horner and Adam Halukka each scored 21 points and Horner added eight rebounds and six assists to lead the Hawkeyes (4-1) to the road win.

Allon Keita had a career-high 23 points for the Bulldogs (1-2), who have lost 26 straight to their in-state rival.

Giants sign Benitez; Mets court Martinez

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — While Mets fans discussed whether their team has a chance to land Pedro Martinez, former New York closer Armando Benitez found a new club, agreeing Tuesday to a \$21.5 million, three-year contract with the San Francisco Giants.

Cincinnati, meanwhile, retained a key part of its rotation, agreeing to re-sign ex-Met Paul Wilson for \$8.2 million over two years.

Martinez isn't close to making a decision on where to sign, a person close to the free-agent ace said on condition of anonymity, and is likely to wait until the New York Yankees determine their level of interest. That could hinge on whether they acquire Randy Johnson from Arizona in a trade that could send Javier Vazquez to the Diamondbacks.

The Mets, trying to make a splash in the free-agent market, offered a \$37.5 million, three-year contract last weekend, an agent with knowledge of the proposal said, also on condition of anonymity. The offer contains an option for a fourth season that could make the deal worth \$50

million over four years, the agent said.

Boston has offered a two-year deal to retain Martinez and must decide by Dec. 7 whether to offer salary arbitration, which would extend the window for the World Series champion Red Sox to re-sign him until Jan. 8.

Martinez's agent, Fernando Cuza, would not comment on the Mets' proposal, which was first reported Tuesday in several New York and Boston newspapers. New Mets general manager Omar Minaya declined comment.

Yankees owner George Steinbrenner met with Martinez in Tampa, Fla., on Nov. 18, and Martinez also met in Florida with New York third baseman Alex Rodriguez.

But the Yankees' primary interest in recent days appears to be Johnson, the 41-year-old left-hander who would prefer to leave the rebuilding Diamondbacks and play for a contender.

Benitez, who bounced back from a subpar 2003 season to save an NL-leading 47 games in 51 chances for Florida last season, gets a \$7.4 million signing bonus and salaries of \$2.5 million in 2005, \$4 million in 2006 and \$7.6 million in 2007.

D.C. panel OKs funding for ballpark, caps costs

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The District of Columbia Council approved financing a ballpark for the Washington-bound Expos after voting Tuesday to cap funding at \$630 million.

The council approved the plan 6-4 with three members, including Chair Linda W. Cropp, voting present. The measure must be approved a second time to become law.

"We're happy that the vote was to approve," said John McHale, an executive vice president in the commissioner's office and a member of baseball's relocation committee.

Cropp's amendment calls for Washington's chief financial officer to produce another estimate of the project's cost in six months. If it is more than \$100 million above the current \$530 million estimate, the location of the ballpark would have to be moved to a less costly site than the one south of the Capitol agreed to by Washington and the Expos, who would be re-named the Nationals.

Indiana fires football coach

INDIANAPOLIS — Gerry Dinardo was fired as Indiana's football coach after a 3-8 season that ended with a 63-24 loss to Purdue in the Hoosiers' season finale in eight years to their state rival.

Dinardo, who has two years left on his contract, had an 8-27 record in three seasons marked by a complete roster turnover.

Dinardo replaced Cam Cameron after the 2001 season. After the rout by Purdue, he said "this

Sports briefs

was just about the worst day we've had as a team."

Hings making brief return

WASHINGTON — Martina Hings plans to play a tournament in Thailand in January, the first WTA Tour event for the former No. 1-ranked player since 2002.

Hings will play the Volvo Women's Open in Pattaya to raise money for several Thai charities that help women and children who have suffered from abuse, homelessness and illness.

Hings was 22 when she retired in 2002 after operations on both ankles.

Baseball ball cost \$800,000

WILLOWBROOK, Ill. — A complete set of 1914 Cracker Jack baseball cards featuring "Sholess" Joe Jackson and Ty Cobb has been sold for a record \$800,000.

The cards were in pristine condition, said Doug Allen, president of MastroNet Inc., an auction house in this Chicago suburb. He said the previous record for a complete set of baseball cards was \$360,000.

A New York woman — who along with the buyer asked to remain anonymous — found the 144-card set with 2,500 other baseball cards in a shoe box in her home. The cards originally belonged to her uncle, who died during World War II. The woman's father kept them until his death last year, Allen said.

After falling flat, BC heads to Tire Bowl

The Associated Press

Boston College missed out on a Bowl Championship Series game thanks to a lopsided loss to Syracuse, so it must settle for the Continental Tire Bowl instead.

Bowl games

The Eagles (8-3) were invited to the Dec. 30 bowl in Charlotte, N.C., on Tuesday, three days after falling to the Orange-men 43-17 and losing the opportunity to win their first outright Big East title. The Eagles will face future ACC rival North Carolina (6-5) in the bowl.

There was plenty of other bowl action Tuesday, including Georgia accepting a bid to play Wisconsin in the Outback Bowl on New Year's Day in Tampa, Fla., and Florida State formally accepting its bid to play in the Gator Bowl on Jan. 1 against West Virginia.

Also, Boise State will play Louisiana in the Liberty Bowl; New Mexico faces Navy in the Emerald Bowl; Connecticut heads to the Motor City Bowl; Marshall was invited to the Fort Worth Bowl against Cincinnati; Bowling Green will play Memphis in the GMAC Bowl; Georgia Tech goes to the Champs Sports Bowl; Wyoming is headed to the Las Vegas Bowl; and Virginia is off to the MPC Computers Bowl.

Peach Bowl officials said they want Florida to play in the Dec. 31 game. It looks like No. 22 Texas A&M and No. 21 Arizona State will be invited to play in the Holiday Bowl in San Diego on Dec. 30.

However, if there's a shift in the BCS final standings and Texas moves ahead of California, the Holiday Bowl could match Cal against Texas Tech.

In addition, Notre Dame players are considering not playing in the Insight Bowl on Dec. 28 after coach Tyrone Willingham was fired. Athletic director Kevin White said he didn't know who

would coach the game. Notre Dame accepted the invitation on Sunday.

All Boston College had to do to get a berth in either the Fiesta or Sugar Bowl was win at home against a Syracuse team that was 5-5 and needed a victory just to be bowl eligible. But the Eagles could not get it done in their last season in the Big East. BC and Syracuse finished tied for the league title with Pittsburgh and West Virginia.

The Eagles join the ACC next year.

"We've got a lot to prove," said BC quarterback Paul Peterson, who missed the Syracuse game with a broken hand. "People say we're no good after just one game. We're going to prove we're a good team."

No. 8 Georgia (9-2), considered a national title contender at the beginning of the season, fell short with losses to SEC rivals Tennessee and Auburn.

Still, the Outback Bowl is a good consolation prize, following appearances in the Sugar and Capital One the past two years.

The Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tenn., features the nation's top two offenses. No. 7 Louisville (9-1) leads the nation in total and scoring offense behind quarterback Stefan Lefors, while No. 11 Boise State (11-0) is second in both categories.

Connecticut (4-4) will play the winner of Thursday night's Mid-American Conference title game between Toledo (8-3) and Miami of Ohio (8-3) in its first postseason trip as a Division I school.

Marshall (6-5) earned its seventh bowl trip in eight seasons despite losing two of its final three games.

The second-year Fort Worth Bowl was supposed to pit teams from Conference USA and the Big 12, but there weren't enough eligible Big 12 schools. Bowl officials had also negotiated with the

inspired didn't wish to speak to the media on Tuesday, but in the past he frequently said No. 1 had higher expectations for Notre Dame than he did.

He said the biggest problem for the Irish was the inability to play well on a regular basis, particularly on offense.

"Because it keeps you from being the consistent winner and creating that momentum that you need," he said heading into the Tennessee game three weeks ago.

White praised Willingham, saying the coach has done everything the school wanted off the field. It was on the field that was the problem.

"We simply have not made the progress on the field that we need to make," White said. "Nor have we been able to create the positive momentum necessary in our efforts to return the Notre Dame program to the elite level of the college football world."

Willingham finishes at Notre Dame with a 21-15 record, a winning percentage of .583



Instead of playing in the Fiesta or Sugar bowls, Boston College's Andre Callender (32) will go to Charlotte, N.C., for the Continental Tire Bowl.

ACC and Big East for another opponent.

Georgia Tech finally will play in a bowl that's not too far from home. After being sent out West for three straight years, the Yellow Jackets (6-5) will play a team from the Big 12 in the bowl formerly known as the Tangerine.

The announcement had been expected since the weekend, when Virginia said it would not play in a bowl from Dec. 13 to 21 because of exams. The Cavaliers will play on Dec. 27 in Boise, Idaho, their third straight bowl appearance.

Virginia's opponent has not been determined, but Gary Beck, executive director of the MPC Computers Bowl, said an offer has been made to Fresno State.

The Peach Bowl wants the Gators and hopes Ron Zook will hang around to coach the game in Atlanta.

Bowl president Gary Stokan

said that the selection committee voted for Florida over Alabama as its choice from the SEC, assuming the Gators are available.

There's one caveat: An Auburn loss in the SEC title game could force the Peach in a different direction. The Peach Bowl is not expected to formally announce Florida as one of its teams until after Saturday's SEC title game between the Tigers and Tennessee.

No. 20 Florida (7-4) is expected to play the loser of Saturday's Miami-Virginia Tech game. The winner will get the ACC's automatic bid to the BCS.

Zook was fired last month but agreed to finish out his third season. He hasn't said whether he will coach in the bowl. Alabama (6-5) is expected to play in the Music City Bowl.

New Mexico (7-4) is headed for its third straight postseason appearance following back-to-back trips to the Las Vegas Bowl.

percent. That's the same winning percentage as his predecessor, Dave (35-25). Since 1913, only Kuharchic (42.5) and Faust (53.5) have won winning percentages.

The school thought they found the perfect coach during Willingham's first season. He got off to an 8-0 start—the second best start in school history—and after a surprisingly easy victory at Florida State, the Irish, at No. 4, had their highest ranking in eight years. The Irish went 2-3 their last five games that season, including a 28-6 loss to North Carolina State in the Gator Bowl. They went 5-7 last season, losing by 30 or more points to Michigan, Florida State and Southern California.

This season the Irish pulled off upsets of Michigan and Tennessee but also were beaten badly by USC and Purdue. They also lost games they were expected to win against BYU, Boston College and Pittsburgh.

Despite finishing a disappointing 6-5 this season, the Irish accepted an invitation Sunday to the Insight Bowl in Phoenix on Dec. 28. It's not clear now whether the Irish will still go, and if they do who will coach them.

Bowl games

Tuesday, Dec. 14
New Orleans Bowl
North Texas (7-4) vs. Southern Miss. (6-4)
Thursday, Dec. 21
Champs Sports Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Big 12
Wednesday, Dec. 22
Duke vs. Wake Forest
Mobile, Ala.
Memphis (9-2) vs. Bowling Green (9-3)
Thursday, Dec. 23
Fort Worth (Texas Tech)
Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5)
Las Vegas Bowl
Wyoming (6-5) vs. Pac-10 N/A, 4/5
Friday, Dec. 24
Kauai Bowl
At Honolulu
UAB (7-4) vs. Wake Forest
At Nashville, Tenn.
MPC Computers Bowl
At Boise, Idaho
WAC vs. Virginia (8-3)
Motor City Bowl
At Pontiac, Mich.
MAC vs. Connecticut (7-4)
Tuesday, Dec. 28
Independence Bowl
At Shreveport, La.
Big 12 vs. ACC

Insight Bowl
At Phoenix
Pac-10 N/A, 4/5 vs. Notre Dame (6-5)
Wednesday, Dec. 29
Houston Bowl
Texas-El Paso (8-3) vs. Big 12
Alamo Bowl
At San Antonio
Ohio State (11-0) vs. Big 12 N/A, 4
Thursday, Dec. 30
Colonial Life Bowl
At Charlotte, N.C.
Franklin Pierce vs. North Carolina (6-5)
Emerald Bowl
At Boston
New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (6-2)
Pac-10 N/A, 12/3 vs. Big 12 N/A, 12/3
Silicon Valley Classic
At San Jose, Calif.
WAC vs. MAC

Friday, Dec. 31
Music City Bowl
At Nashville, Tenn.
SEC vs. Minnesota (6-5)
Sun Bowl
At El Paso, Texas
Purdue (7-4) vs. Pac-10 N/A, 3
Liberty Bowl
At Memphis, Tenn.
Wisconsin (11-0) vs. Louisville (9-1)
Peach Bowl
At Atlanta
ACC No. 3 vs. SEC

SEC vs. Big 12 N/A, 1
Cotton Bowl
At Dallas
Black Bowl
At Tampa, Fla.
Georgia Tech (9-2)
Cotton Bowl
At Louisville, Ky.
Wisconsin (9-1) vs. West Virginia (8-3)
Pac-10 N/A, 12/3 vs. Big 12 N/A, 12/3
Rose Bowl
At Pasadena, Calif.
Michigan (9-2) vs. Pac-10 champion or BCS

Monday, Jan. 3
Sugar Bowl
At New Orleans
BCS vs. BCS
Tuesday, Jan. 4
Orange Bowl
At Miami
BCS1 vs. BCS2

List: Notre Dame courting Meyer

LIST, FROM BACK PAGE

"I guess I'm one of those guys, I try to avoid it," Meyer said. "You can only avoid it for so long. I'm not going to have a team meeting to discuss it. I think our guys are still focused."

The 40-year-old Meyer has been mentioned for other jobs. He's dealt with comment on the Florida opening ever since Ron Zook was fired last month. Meyer has only said he and his family are happy in Utah and he plans on coaching as long as time.

Meyer left Notre Dame for his first head coaching job, at Bowling Green. He quickly turned around the Falcons, going 8-3 and 9-3 before being fired to Utah in 2003. The Utes were 10-2 last season.

"He's a great coach and he's obviously had a lot of success," Utah quarterback Alex Smith said. "He's a great coach and he's obviously had a lot of success, somebody's going to want a piece of you. Right now, they're going to want him."

A surprising 3-and-out for Willingham

By TOM COYNE

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Tyrone Willingham often used the word "more" to describe what it was like to coach at Notre Dame. More pressure. More scrutiny. More urgency.

In the end, though, he got less.

He was fired Tuesday after just three seasons, receiving less time than Bob Davie, Gerry Faust or even Joe Kuharich to turn around Notre Dame's fortunes. He served the shortest tenure of any non-interim coach since Hunk Anderson was there from 1953-55.

Athletic director Kevin White said he doesn't think firing Willingham so quickly, after most Irish coaches received five years, is the sign of a new era.

"If it says anything, it's an underscore of the notion that football is very important to Notre Dame and the competitive expectations are not downwardly negotiable," White said.

Willingham knew that. The school said Will-

Firing shows Irish starting to blend in

Every fading dynasty gets more desperate the further the memories recede, and it turns out Notre Dame is no different.

So Ty Willingham was informed Tuesday, with three years left on the biggest contract in school history and three less-than-satisfying seasons behind him, that he wouldn't be around to see his first recruiting class graduate.

The decision to fire Willingham was made by the university's higher-ups, after what was reported to be an emergency

meeting of the university's board of trustees. Exactly what the "emergency" was remains a matter of some speculation. But it fell to athletic director Kevin White to explain why, for the first time in school history, Notre Dame chose not to honor a commitment to its football coach.

Jim Litke



"From Sunday through Friday our football program has exceeded all expectations, in every way," White said at a news conference. "But on Saturday, we've struggled. We've been up and down and sideways a little bit."

If you're searching for a post-mortem to the Willingham era, you won't find a more succinct one. Off the field, he was nearly flawless. On it, the "up" was a stunning 8-0 run Willingham produced at the start of his stay in South Bend; the "down and sideways" covered just about everything since.

His teams went 21-15 in that stretch and lost big games by lopsided scores, the kind of record that would have drawn a pink slip at more than a few traditional football powerhouses, much the same way Nebras-



AP photos

Perhaps Tyrone Willingham, left, was fired Tuesday because Notre Dame feared they would lose Utah coach Urban Meyer to Florida. Meyer is a former Irish assistant.

ka ditched Frank Solich last season and Florida canned Ron Zook with a few games left in this one.

Notre Dame used to pride itself on not being part of that crowd.

The Irish made a point of keeping underwhelming Gerry Faust and overmatched Bob Davie for all five years of their contracts. Now, there's no pretending otherwise.

All the other things that made the Irish special once no longer apply. A program that has collected more national titles than any other hasn't brought one home in 16 years, and hasn't seriously contended since 1993. It's been 17 years since a Heisman Trophy was added to the display case. And now patience, always in short supply at Notre Dame, has evaporated as well. That makes the Irish less special still.

To be fair, Willingham knew what the bargain was when he signed on. He knew that waking up the echoes was a lot tougher trick now than in the days when Rockne, Leahy and Parseghian managed to pull it off, especially if he was going to do it while running a clean program.

The only part he got right was that last one. And even that didn't count for much when rivals like Bob Stoops at Oklahoma and Pete Carroll at Southern California were recruiting circles around Willingham and returning their programs to national prominence in less time, all the while steering clear of trouble. They weren't hampered by the tough academic standards that apply at Notre Dame, but Willingham arrived there fresh from a stint at Stanford, where the standards are tougher still.

For all that, there is still no tougher job

in the game than the one Willingham had until Tuesday. The Irish are the only team in college football with a few million unpaid consultants and their own network TV deal. When he showed up on campus, the program was still reeling from the embarrassment caused by George O'Leary's padded résumé.

Based on Notre Dame's history, and despite the alumni who began nipping at his heels once the magical 8-0 start yielded a 2-3 finish in his first season Willingham had every reason to believe he'd have more time. Enough time, at least, to put his recruits, his West Coast offense and his philosophy in place. That was before the board of trustees called an emergency session — the emergency apparently caused by reports that the game's hottest young coach, Utah's Urban Meyer, was being seriously courted by Florida.

Meyer is a former Irish assistant and a bona fide offensive genius, a qualification that the higher-ups at Notre Dame apparently believe will get him into the living rooms of all those skilled passers and catchers who crossed Notre Dame off their recruiting lists years ago. Of course, they believed the same thing about Willingham just three years ago.

Meyer, whose Utes are 11-0 and ranked No. 5 in his second season, thinks he knows what he's getting himself into. He has a clause in his current deal that allows him to leave for Notre Dame without a buyout.

"I have great respect for that university. That's the reason it's in my contract," Meyer said after practice Tuesday. "I think a lot of people look into it more than what it is."

Maybe so. But the last guy who had the job thought the same thing and look where he is now.

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at: jlitke@ap.org

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SPORTS



Eagles' defense making its point;
Packers' Davenport equipped
to carry a full workload, Page 27



Duke topples Michigan State



J.J. Redick (4), shooting over Michigan State's Kelvin Torbert (23), had 29 points — 21 in the first half — to lead No. 10 Duke to an 81-74 victory over No. 11 Michigan State in Durham, N.C., on Tuesday. The Atlantic Coast Conference has won four of five games in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. See Page 29 for details.

Rockets' fourth straight loss turns fans against Van Gundy; NBA to set new security guidelines

Page 28



Gates jamming in S.D. Page 26



No. 25 Wisconsin tops 12th-ranked Maryland and extends home winning streak to 31 games

Page 29



Utah football coach Urban Meyer, left, with wife Shelley and daughter, Gigi, has compiled a 21-2 record in two seasons at Utah. Meyer, 40, was an assistant coach at Notre Dame from 1996-2000.

Utah's Meyer tops Irish's list

Tedford, Ferentz and Gruden also considered candidates

BY DOUG ALDEN
The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Notre Dame is looking for a coach, and Utah's Urban Meyer could be among the top candidates to take over college football's most glamorous program.

Meyer, a Fighting Irish assistant for five years, couldn't avoid answering questions on the topic after Tyrone Willingham was fired Tuesday. Meyer has a clause in his contract that allows him to leave to coach Notre Dame without a buyout.

"I have great respect for that university," Meyer said Tuesday after leading his fifth-ranked Utes (11-0) through practice. "That's the reason it's in my contract."

"I think a lot of people look into it more than what it is. I'm sure that this is going to spark a lot of discussion, but I'm just trying to get a team ready to play in a bowl game."

While Notre Dame (6-5) was re-considering whether to play in

the Insight Bowl, Utah is set to become the first non-BCS school to play in a Bowl Championship Series game — most likely the Fiesta Bowl.

Meyer isn't the only candidate to surface. Others include California coach Jeff Tedford, Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz and Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Jon Gruden.

Tedford has had success at a school with high academic expectations similar to Notre Dame's; Ferentz was hired at Maine in 1990 by current Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White; and Gruden was mentioned prominently in the Notre Dame search three years ago. Gruden grew up in South Bend and his father was an assistant under former Irish coach Dan Devine.

Meyer, though, is the top name right now. He talked to a few players who asked him about the Notre Dame opening. The coach declined to say whether he would be interested if the school called.

SEE LIST ON PAGE 30

Notre Dame goes to the extreme in cutthroat world of coaching Page 31